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ABSTRACT

Higher education career services are more strongly developed in the United Kingdom than in other European countries. Increasing numbers of students and pressures on university budgets and recent major transformations in the structures of work and career (including reduced recruitment into graduate training programs in large companies and erosion of the notion of specific graduate-level jobs) have resulted in reconsideration of the institutional role of career services. Various options, including the minimalist, outsourcing, and devolution options, have been explored. Career services are also being reexamined in a national policy context. Pressures on the traditional core activities of career services--individual and group guidance, information, and employer liaison and placement--are changing their nature and posing questions about their future form. Seven strategic directions for career services have been identified. Four (the integrated guidance model, integrated placement model, curriculum model, and learning organization model) are based on stronger embedding within the institution. Three (the extended support model, lifelong guidance model, and alumni model) are based on delivering career services after graduation. (Appended are a checklist of strategic issues and information on the consultation process used to gather information for the report. Contains 91 references.) (MN)

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ED 422 479

NICEC PROJECT REPORT

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR CAREERS SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A G Watts

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CRAC

The challenges to careers services are greater than ever before. Attending to students' employability within a more student-driven higher education system is high on the policy agenda. Careers services have a key contribution to make to this agenda.

This report identifies and discusses strategic directions for careers services in higher education, in the light of the changes taking place both in higher education and in the world of work. It is designed to help careers services, their institutions, the government, and other stakeholders (notably employers, students and their representative organisations), to review the role and realise the potential of such services.

AGCAS

The report has been commissioned by the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services. AGCAS is the professional association for careers services in higher education in the United Kingdom and Eire.

NICEC

The report has been written by Tony Watts, Director of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling. NICEC is a network organisation initiated and sponsored by CRAC. It conducts applied research and development work related to guidance in educational institutions and in work and community settings. Its aims are to develop theory, inform policy, and enhance practice.

CRAC

CRAC is a registered educational charity and independent development agency founded in 1964. Its education and training programmes, publications and sponsored projects provide links between the worlds of education and employment. Its offices are at Sheraton House, Castle Park, Cambridge CB3 0AX (tel. 01223 460277; fax 01223 311708).

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NICEC Project Report

Strategic Directions for Careers Services in Higher Education

An independent consultative report prepared for the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services

June 1997

A G Watts

CRAC

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FOREWORD

Sir Graeme Davies
Principal and Vice-Chancellor
University of Glasgow
Chairman, Project Advisory Group

It was with particular pleasure that I accepted the invitation from AGCAS to chair the Advisory Group for this report. I have always seen careers services as critical enablers at the crucial interface between higher education and employment. For most students, a degree is a means, not as an end. Students and government alike are concerned about the return on their investment in higher education, and rightly want assurance that help will be provided in yielding this return. Universities and colleges have a responsibility to provide such help. It is important in their own interest that they are seen to carry out this responsibility in a committed and professional way.

This report could not be more timely. The issues it addresses are central to the current debates about the future role and structure of higher education. I congratulate AGCAS for its vision in commissioning the report, and for its wisdom in asking Tony Watts to carry it out. I commend the report to all who are concerned about the relationship between students, higher education and employment. I hope it will lead to much creative discussion – and much constructive action.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evolution

Higher education careers services are more strongly developed in the UK than in other European countries. This is linked to the UK's non-vocational tradition, with occupational flexibility on graduation; and also to its *in loco parentis* tradition. The UK model is widely regarded overseas as a world leader in this field, alongside the USA. Graduates are less likely to be unemployed in these two countries than in any other OECD country.

The first appointments board was founded in Oxford in 1892; by the mid-1950s all universities had such a service. In the late 1960s and 1970s, they were transformed, in function and in title, into careers services. This involved more attention to careers guidance, and in particular to interventions designed to help students make their own decisions in an informed and reflective way.

With the expansion of student numbers and the pressures on higher education budgets, there has been a move away from the one-to-one interview as the core activity. Instead, an open-access model has been widely adopted, in which students have access to a wide range of resources – information services, short interviews, computer-aided guidance systems, group sessions – with a long interview available for students needing more intensive personal help.

Strong collaborative structures have also been developed across services, through the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) and the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (CSU). These have included training programmes. A Certificate and Diploma in Careers Education in Higher Education have been launched in association with AGCAS, to provide a formal training and accreditation structure.

The changing context

Recent years have seen a major transformation in the structures of work and of career. The traditional model of career was concerned with progression up a graded hierarchy within an organisation or profession. Such careers have been fractured by employers' responses to the impact of new technology and the globalisation of the economy. Individuals now have to take more responsibility for their own career, redefined as the individual's lifelong progression in learning and in work.

There have also been massive changes in the graduate labour market:

- Reduced recruitment into graduate training schemes in large companies.
- Erosion of the notion of specific graduate-level jobs.
- More graduates entering employment in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

These changes have been linked to a huge expansion of the higher education system. This has placed great pressure on resources. Many students are now dependent on loans. It seems likely that students will in future be expected to pay a higher proportion of the costs of higher education. This will produce a more consumer-driven system.

Meanwhile, higher education is becoming more flexibly responsive to the concept of lifelong learning. Systems of credit accumulation and transfer make it possible for students to move more easily in and out of the system, and within and between institutions. The rigid boundary with further education is looking less tenable. There is however growing institutional diversity on these and other matters. Careers services have to respond to a wide range of different institutional agendas.

The institutional role of careers services

Are careers services an integral part of a higher education institution, or an additional service open to review in terms of their specific costs and benefits?

Employability and career success are major outcomes which government, employers and students alike expect from higher education. This should be borne in mind in reviewing suggestions for funding services from fees to employers and/or students, or for outsourcing careers services to external contractors. Experience so far suggests that such fees are viewed as marginal rather than core income; and that while some limited functions can be outsourced, those who have looked at outsourcing as a more general solution have pulled back from it.

The key argument against outsourcing is based on the benefits of embedding careers services within institutions. This acknowledges that preparing students to make a productive and personally satisfying contribution to the economy and to society is an integral part of the function of higher education. It makes it possible to

link this concern with academic planning and with the curriculum.

This has implications for where such services are to be placed within the institutional structure. The careers service can be aligned:

- To other *student* services. This can work well, but it can also marginalise the service, with a barrier of several managerial layers before it can gain access to senior management. It tends to identify the careers service as a service to individual students, outside the academic process.
- To other *academic* services. This may include staff development and consultancy to teaching departments, and involvement in academic planning.
- To other *marketing* services. This can link the service to other services designed to market the institution to employers and to potential students. It can produce conflicts between the guidance and marketing roles, in determining who is the primary client.

Alternatively, the careers service can stand on its own, recognising its uniqueness in being simultaneously a student service *and* an academic service *and* a marketing service.

Whatever its institutional location, the careers service needs to have strong links to senior management if the benefits of being institution-based are to be realised. Formal representation on key academic decision-making bodies is also crucial.

This raises the issue of how far the careers service's activities might be devolved to teaching departments. The extent of such devolution is likely to vary between departments offering vocational, semi-vocational and non-vocational courses. It is growing, as departments seek to incorporate elements relating to careers education and to employability into their course provision. Continuing support from a central service is necessary, however, to achieve breadth of opportunity, economies of scale, and consistency of standards.

The national policy context

Higher education sits uneasily in relation to recent government policies on careers guidance. Schools and further education offer students a dual entitlement, from the statutory Careers Service and their own mandated provision; in higher education, on the other hand, it is left to institutions to decide whether to offer a careers service, what form it should take, and what level of resource it should have. If the government is concerned that students should have access to guidance as one of the means of yielding the economic benefits from its substantial investment in higher education, it should be troubled by the disparity of current provision, and the low level of provision in some institutions.

Should strong moves be made towards a more integrated and consumer-driven lifelong learning system, some existing provision might be restructured into a lifelong guidance service based outside institutions to assure its independence and impartiality. This could be seen as complementing services based inside higher education institutions, splitting the current provision into the dual model familiar in schools and further education.

Alternatively, attention might be focused on policy levers to strengthen the role of careers services in higher education within the existing framework. Such levers might include:

- Funding formulae (difficult within the current funding structure).
- Benchmarks on staff:student ratios.
- A nationally applicable student entitlement.

Adapting the core

The traditional core role of careers services is helping students to manage the choices and transitions they need to make on exit from their course in order to proceed effectively to the next stage of their career. The core activities comprise:

- Individual and group guidance.
- Information.
- Employer liaison and placement.

Pressures on each of these are changing their nature and posing questions about their future form:

- Long individual guidance interviews are now increasingly complemented by short 'duty adviser' interviews, designed partly to respond to 'quick queries' and partly to diagnose students' guidance needs and signpost them to appropriate resources. This is viewed by some as a serious and regrettable erosion of quality; by others as a welcome move towards a more student-driven system, which is more in line with student self-reliance.
- Group guidance programmes have been growing, partly to achieve greater cost-effectiveness in the use of resources.
- Information technology is having a major impact on how information is made available.
- Employer liaison and placement activities are being reshaped by:
  - The decline of the 'milk-round' of on-campus selection interviews.
  - The growing practice by large employers of targeting a small number of institutions.
  - The growth of graduate recruitment into SMEs.

This raises issues about the relationship between guidance and placement, and how careers services can keep up-to-date with developments across the full range of the graduate labour market.

Around the core activities, a range of supplementary activities has been developed:

- Additional services for students: pre-entry guidance; arranging course-related placements and/or placements in part-time and vacation jobs; teaching accredited career-planning courses and/or supporting teaching departments in incorporating careers education elements into their courses.
- Making the core activities available to other client-groups: former students; local unemployed graduates; research-contract staff.
- Playing a broader brokerage role: providing the higher education institution with labour-market information to assist in academic planning, and employers with a 'one-stop shop' which will point them to places in the institution where their needs can be met.

Extension of some of these activities could lead to broader strategic options. An important issue for the future is to what extent the core will hold together, and to what extent it might be split or restructured.

Broader strategic options

In broad terms, there are seven strategic directions for careers services which could lead towards major restructuring. They are not mutually exclusive. All represent activities in which many careers services already engage. But it may be difficult to scale them up within an integrated organisational structure. There may already be alternative roles and structures in place. Some institutions may want to carry out these functions in other ways, or not engage in some of them at all.

Four options are based on stronger embedding *within the institution*:

- The *integrated guidance* model, in which the careers service becomes an integral part of a continuous guidance process available to students pre-entry, on entry, and throughout the student's course, as well as on exit from it. The process is designed to help students to construct learning programmes which are related to their career aspirations as well as being intellectually coherent, and then to move on to the next stage of learning and/or work related to achieving those aspirations. The model is potentially strongly encouraged by modularisation, and resembles the approach that has been formally adopted in further education.
- The *integrated placement* model, in which the careers service's concern for placement on graduation becomes part of an integrated placement operation which also includes course-related placements, and placements into part-time and vacation jobs.
- The *curriculum* model, in which the careers service becomes part of a delivery vehicle for, or of a service designed to support academic departments in, incorporating employability skills and career management skills into course provision. This may involve a consultancy and/or delivery role.
- The *learning organisation* model, in which the careers service becomes part of a service designed to foster the career development of all members of the institution: contract researchers and other staff, as well as students.

These models are not incompatible with one another, but there are some tensions between them which mean that, beyond a certain level of provision, they may require some degree of structural separation.

The other three options are based on delivering careers services post-graduation:

- The *extended-support* model, under which the careers service is designed to support students not only on exit from the institution but also in the initial period of career development post-graduation. This recognises that many students now defer serious job-seeking until after graduation, that many take time to stabilise in an initial career direction, and that many need support in finding opportunities and developing their employability during this period.
- The *lifelong guidance* model, in which the careers service becomes part of a lifelong guidance service designed to support graduates from any higher education institution in their career development: possibly as part of a strategy for positioning the institution in relation to lifelong learning; or possibly as an opportunity for the careers service's skills to be marketed more widely, on an income-generating basis.
- The *alumni* model, in which the careers service becomes part of a longer-term support and networking service for the institution's own alumni, related to the institution's strategy for maintaining alumni links.

The alumni model is the only one which is strongly compatible with institution-based careers services; the other two tend to pull away from it towards partnership with other higher education institutions and other bodies.

Strongly resourced services may retain a significant involvement in activities linked to most or all of these models without changing their current shape. In other institutions, however, it seems likely that what will emerge will be a distributed structure, with a variety of different units each attending to one or more of the models. Within such a structure, the careers service might continue to be built around the traditional core, with appropriate links with the other units; or it might significantly change its shape and nature; or it might become the co-ordinating focus for a range of distributed services.

Professional issues

Structures of professional collaboration. Through the activities of AGCAS and CSU, a rich range of common resources has been developed in a very cost-effective way. The structures of collaboration within AGCAS have however been coming under some strain, due to the pressure on resources, the more competitive culture within higher education, and the growing diversity of institutions' needs. This raises questions about whether there should be a tighter specification of what member institutions are expected to contribute, and whether AGCAS should adopt a more flexible and diverse structure.

Recruitment and professional development. The last couple of decades have seen a considerable growth of professionalisation within careers services. Nonetheless, the extent to which staff hold formal professional qualifications is still very varied, and there are important issues about the extent to which guidance qualifications should be the core for all professional staff or whether a range of different professional backgrounds should be encouraged. Other issues include the adequacy of managerial expertise within careers services, and the need to provide more routes for career progression in and out of careers services, so producing greater rotation of staff.

Quality assurance. Some services have taken the initiative in responding to the increased pressures towards accountability. Arguably, however, institutions need support from organisations like AGCAS to provide benchmarks against which they can review their careers services' performance. The quality standards being developed by the National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance may be helpful in this respect.

The impact of information technology

IT could make it possible to deliver the main aspects of a careers service's work through a 'virtual careers centre' available where users are, rather than requiring them to come to a specific location. The direct human contact provided in a physical centre seems likely, however, to have an important role to play for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, the potential of IT to improve the quality and accessibility of careers services is considerable, and not yet fully harnessed. It should be viewed not just as a tool or alternative, but as an agent of change.

PREFACE

This report examines strategic directions for careers services in higher education, in the light of the changes taking place both in higher education and in the world of work. It has been commissioned by the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services to help careers services, their institutions and other interested parties to review such strategic directions, particularly in the debates that will follow the report of the Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, under the chairmanship of Sir Ron Dearing.

The present report adopts some short cuts. Thus the term 'graduates' is used throughout to refer to graduates and diplomates. The term 'careers service' is used generically: some such services are called 'careers advisory services', or have another title. I have used the plural form 'careers service' and 'careers guidance' because it is familiar; my own view however is that there is now a strong case, in the light of the changes in the world of work outlined in Section 3, for adopting the singular form 'career service' and 'career guidance'; this is on the grounds that the career is now owned by the individual, who has a single career no matter how varied a form it may take (Collin and Watts, 1996).

A few parts of the report, notably in Sections 2 and 3, are adapted from earlier work (Watts and Hawthorn, 1992; Watts, 1996a; 1996c). The great majority, though, is based on original fieldwork carried out specifically for the project.

I am grateful to Margaret Dane, Director of the Careers Advisory Service at Heriot-Watt University and the current President of AGCAS, for her consistent support and encouragement, and to Lili Goldman and Vannessa Nichols for the skilled secretarial help they have provided. I am also indebted to AGCAS more generally, for having the courage and foresight to commission an independent report, and to the many people listed in the appendix who have been consulted as part of the fieldwork. Many of the ideas and insights in the report are theirs; the way they are presented, and the judgements made about them, are my responsibility alone.

Tony Watts
Cambridge
May 1997

INTRODUCTION

The opportunities open to careers services in higher education are greater than ever before. High-quality careers education and guidance is now widely recognised in policy circles as having an important contribution to make to the nation's economic competitiveness. Within higher education, issues relating to students' employability are high on the policy agenda. The moves towards a more student-driven system could greatly enhance the importance of the careers service's role. The range of needs to which careers services are being invited to respond is growing ever wider.

At the same time, careers services are facing major challenges. The increases in the numbers of students have not been matched by parallel increases in resources. Many are struggling to maintain their levels of service. The pressures on funding within higher education institutions mean that all activities are increasingly subject to question and review. The growing diversity of functions and resourcing between careers services in different institutions is threatening the strong patterns of collaboration that have been built up. It also runs the risk that careers services as a whole will be judged by their weakest representatives.

If careers services and their institutions are to realise these opportunities and meet these challenges, it is critical that they find the creative space to review possible strategic directions, to determine priorities, and to develop action plans. The danger is that careers services get so preoccupied with delivery they do not find time to reflect and to plan (see para 7.3). This would be particularly ironic in their case, because their work is based centrally on helping students to realise the importance of reviewing options, making decisions, setting goals, and making plans.

The need for strategic planning is especially acute because many of the new opportunities may require new forms of partnership and new organisational structures. The question is not just what the careers service should do, but what form it should take, where it should hive off activities into new units and subsidiaries, and where strategic partnerships should be forged with other units and organisations inside and outside the institution.

How institutions view their careers service is likely to be a significant indicator of how they seek to position themselves in relation to the growing concern with employability and with moves towards a more student-driven system. Careers services can be viewed as somewhat marginal student services. Alternatively, they can be viewed as a major strategic vehicle for achieving the institution's mission and purpose, and adapting to change.

The strategic directions adopted by and for careers services are likely to vary considerably between different institutions. This however raises further issues both for students and for employers regarding the 'entitlement' they can expect. It also raises issues for national policy, as to whether there should be a national baseline entitlement, and if so, how it can be effected.

The present report identifies and discusses the major strategic issues relating to the future role of careers services in higher education, and the main strategic directions they can take. It is based on interviews, focus-group discussions and written evidence from a wide range of individuals and organisations (see Appendix B). These represent the key 'stakeholders' in careers services in higher education: students, employers, higher education institutions and government. The report is designed to help these stakeholders to review the role and realise the potential of such services.

THE EVOLUTION OF CAREERS SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

2.1 Careers services are more strongly developed in the UK than in other European countries. Paradoxically, this is linked to the non-vocational tradition within British higher education, with considerable occupational flexibility on graduation. Around half of graduate 'current vacancies' are for students from any discipline (Bee and Dolton, 1990). There is much less rigid 'tracking' than in other European countries, where there tends to be a more widespread assumption that university students have already committed themselves to certain occupational areas by the nature of the courses they have chosen. The need for separate help outside course structures is accordingly more acute in the UK.

2.2 At the same time, higher education institutions in Britain have tended to assume stronger *in loco parentis* responsibilities than in other European countries. This has been linked to their residential tradition, supported by a grants structure which has permitted students readily to go to institutions away from their homes. Support structures to help students with their vocational as well as their personal and educational problems have grown naturally out of this tradition.

Origins

2.3 The only existing authoritative report on the role of careers services in higher education was the Heyworth Report produced under the auspices of the University Grants Committee (1964). Published shortly after the influential report of the Robbins Committee (1963) on higher education, it was supported by extensive surveys of students, employers and universities. Just as Robbins provides a basepoint for the Dearing Inquiry, so Heyworth provides a basepoint for the present report.

2.4 The Heyworth Report noted that up to the end of the nineteenth century, most university graduates – which at that time in England meant almost exclusively men from Oxford and Cambridge – became parsons, schoolmasters or civil servants. A few went into politics or law or medicine. In general, it was considered eccentric and ungentlemanly for a university man to go into business. There was no need for careers services, because the older universities were part of a social pattern in which dons, undergraduates and parents all knew what careers were approachable from the university and how to get into them.

2.5 The origins of university appointments boards – as they were called in the mid-1960s – were traced by the Heyworth Report to the foundation in Oxford around 1892 of an intercollegiate committee set up to pool dons' patronage in the public and grammar schools. It gradually extended its activities to the civil service and, around 1904, to industry. By 1914 appointments services had been set up at Cambridge and five other universities; a further nine followed between the two World Wars; and by the mid-1950s all universities had such a service.

2.6 The activities of university appointments boards as defined by the Heyworth Report were threefold:

- Advisory *interviews*.
- The provision of *information* about careers, employers and jobs.
- *Placement* activities, including notifying vacancies to students, and arranging selection interviews between students and employers.

Most of the professional staff had been 'in business, in teaching, or in some other activity closely related to that on which they were liable to be asked to give advice' (p.10). The 'cornerstone' of the service was the interview: pressures of numbers at particular times of the year meant that there were often long waiting lists for such interviews. While the professional staff tended to stress the advisory side of their role, few had any training for it. For many students, job-finding was the service's only function of any consequence: 'the service exists, so far as many students can see, solely to tell them what vacancies there are and how to get in touch with those who offer them' (p.44). This included selection interviews arranged with employers on the university campus, normally in the spring term: what subsequently became known as the 'milk-round'.

2.7 The Heyworth Report recommended that the advisory side of the services needed strengthening, through increased staffing. It suggested that the aim should be a staff:student ratio of one appointments officer for every 100 final-year students 'available for employment'. Among its other proposals was setting up a central services unit for the universities as a whole to carry out functions (for example, providing a register of employers) which involved individual services in unnecessary duplication of effort. In short, the report was concerned with reinforcing the existing model of

university appointments boards rather than moving towards a new model.

From appointments boards to careers services

Since the Heyworth Report, the appointments boards have been transformed, both in function and in title, into careers services. This has taken place alongside a huge change in the structure and size of the higher education system. The Heyworth Report was confined to a reasonably homogenous university sector comprising, in 1960, just 25 universities. By 1995 there were 89 universities, plus 75 other colleges (of higher or further education) receiving funding for higher education courses (Smithers and Robinson, 1996). Many of the new universities have much stronger vocational traditions than the older universities. Their careers services have tended to be of more recent origin, and less well resourced (Kirkland, 1988).

The expansion of institutions has been matched by a massive expansion of students. In 1960/61 there were 92,000 full-time first-degree students in the UK (UGC, 1967); by 1995/96 there were 860,500 (as well as 174,100 part-time first-degree students) (HESA, 1996). The proportion of 21-year-olds with degrees rose from 3.5% to 23% during this period (IER, 1997). There was also a large increase in the number of mature students (see para 3.11).

This growth meant that students entered higher education from more varied social backgrounds; it also meant that graduates moved into much wider areas of the labour market than previously. From an early stage, these changes placed severe strain on the appointments-board model. It was widely criticised for providing effective assistance for those who had already decided what they wanted to do, but little to those who had not. Services increasingly recognised that offering information and advice to the decided was not enough: that guidance was at least as important an aspect of the service as placement, and perhaps more so. They began to change their titles to 'careers service' or 'careers advisory service'.

At the same time, there was a shift in philosophical approach within the careers services. The desirability of simple advice-giving began to be questioned. There was a growth of interest in interventions which laid more emphasis on helping students to make their own decisions in an informed and reflective way. Some careers advisers began to change the style of interviewing, to incorporate less directive counselling techniques (Newsome *et al.*, 1973). This was potentially, however, very time-consuming. There was accordingly also a growth of interest in careers education: structured programmes of group work designed to help students to develop the knowledge and competences that would enable them to take more responsibility for their own career development (Watts, 1977). Working in groups offered possibilities for more student time 'on task' for each unit of the careers adviser's time.

Towards an open-access model

Meanwhile, the pressures on the resources of careers services continued to grow. As higher education institutions expanded, their budgets were not increased commensurately. This was true of careers services too. The Heyworth staffing ratio, never realised, began to recede into the mists of fantasy. Accordingly, in the 1980s many careers services reviewed their work patterns. They recognised that the traditional hour-long interview was highly labour-intensive, and not always the most effective way of using their professional resources. They realised in particular that many students' information needs might be met more effectively by upgrading the services' information resources and making use of computer technology.

The result was, in some services, a radical redesign both of work patterns and of work spaces. Instead of the one-to-one interview being seen as the core activity, with a careers library available as a supportive resource, an open-access information room was now viewed as the heart of the service. Students were able to come in when they wished, to browse through a wide range of information files, videos and other materials, and to have access to personal help not only from upgraded information staff but also from careers advisers who were available on a rota 'surgery' basis for brief informal interviews. These were designed partly to signpost students to other services where their needs might be met. Such services might include not only the resources in the information room but also group sessions, work-experience opportunities, and the like. The traditional hour-long interview was then available for those students who needed more intensive personal help.

This shift of focus was greatly strengthened by the growing use of computer-aided guidance systems. A number of limited systems had been introduced in higher education from the 1970s. The most notable of these was GRADSCOPE, a matching system available first on a batch-processing and subsequently on an interactive basis (Wilson, 1980). Then in the 1980s, following a feasibility study by Pierce-Price (1982), a major learning system was developed – PROSPECT (HE) – which was comparable with the leading North American systems and well in advance of systems developed in other parts of the world. It was designed to be *comprehensive*, including as many as possible of the main components of the careers guidance process; it was also to be capable of use on a *stand-alone* basis,

without any need for support, though it was expected to be more effective when fully integrated with the other facilities offered by careers services (Watts *et al.*, 1991). The active involvement of careers services in its development significantly facilitated the move towards a more open-access approach (Sampson and Watts, 1992).

The organisational changes in careers services were often reflected in physical changes. Traditionally, many services had comprised a small reception area leading to a number of separate rooms occupied by individual careers advisers, with a further room for the careers library. Now, large open spaces were created, in which a wide range of resources could be attractively presented and work-spaces for individual students provided. There were still rooms for individual one-to-one interviews, but these were less prominent.

The extent of the move towards an open-access approach has varied considerably. In some institutions, progress has been limited by constraints on physical changes. In general, though, most services have been touched by the change to some extent. It is part of a wider European trend in which the concept of an expert guidance specialist working with individual clients in a contextual vacuum is replaced, or at least supplemented, by a more diffuse approach in which a more varied range of interventions is used, with a greater emphasis on the individual as an active agent rather than a passive recipient within the guidance process (Watts *et al.*, 1993).

Through these changes, the level of student contact with the work of careers services has been maintained and even in some cases increased, despite the massive growth of student numbers. Under the old appointments-board model, students using the services were required to 'register'. The Heyworth Report found that the number of students doing so varied considerably from university to university, but that the national proportion of registrants was 66% (UGC, 1964). Kirkland's (1988) survey of nine institutions found that 84% of respondents had had some contact with the service at their institution; 77% acknowledged, either strongly or with reservations, that they were satisfied with the work of advisers; and only 29% found it difficult to get enough individual attention. More recently, the 1997 High Fliers Survey of final-year students in the 24 universities attracting most interest from national employers found that 75% had used the careers service and had made an average of five visits each; of these, four in five had found the service very or quite useful.

On the other hand, Purcell and Pitcher (1996) noted that the proportion of students seeking careers advice was lower in the new universities. They attributed this in part to the greater proportion of students on vocational courses in these universities, and in part to their lower level of resourcing. A survey of students graduating at Leeds Metropolitan in 1993 – with a staff:student ratio towards the upper end of the range shown in para 5.14 – found that 60% had made no contact with the careers service; just over half of these felt that in retrospect it would have been beneficial to have done so.

Professional collaboration and professional development

Another way of increasing the effectiveness of careers services within constrained resources has been by developing strong collaborative structures across services. The first significant step to establish operational links between university appointments boards was the establishment of a Statistics Committee in 1955 to pool information on first destinations of graduates and to make them available nationally. This provided a base for the services not only to collaborate but to achieve media prominence and policy influence. In 1967 the Standing Conference of University Appointments Services (SCUAS) was created, which made it possible for the services to look at their work as a whole on a national basis. A decade later, in 1977, SCUAS transmuted itself into the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), with four primary objectives:

(a) To encourage and facilitate the exchange of views and information.

(b) To foster and co-ordinate investigations and promote improvements in services.

(c) To encourage training in the skills and techniques appropriate to the work of its members.

(d) To express a collaborative viewpoint.

Meanwhile, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals belatedly in 1972 acted upon the Heyworth Report's recommendation (see para 2.7 above) to set up up a Central Services Unit (later retitled the Higher Education Careers Services Unit) which would provide a specialist resource for common tasks like the collection of vacancy and statistical information (Scott, 1993; Thorne, 1985).

The patterns of recruitment of careers advisers have changed considerably over this period, merging two very different traditions. The pattern of the old university appointments boards was, as we have seen, to recruit people with experience in the fields of work on which they were advising. This tradition survived the transition to careers services: Kirkland and Jepson (1983) found that 69% of advisers had previously worked in the private sector (presumably in industry or commerce). Careers staff in the former polytechnics, on the other hand, had often been trained as Local Education Authority careers officers (the polytechnics

were under the control of LEAs, and many had originally been serviced by the LEA Careers Service). This background has become increasingly common among higher education careers advisers. Kidd *et al.* (1993) found that 51% of such advisers had previously worked as an LEA careers officer.

These backgrounds are not mutually exclusive, of course. Nonetheless, there have been some tensions between careers advisers whose professional authority stemmed from their own career experience, and those (often younger) advisers whose authority stemmed from their specialist guidance training. The former can be criticised stereotypically for their lack of formal training in guidance theory and skills; the latter for their lack of first-hand knowledge of the 'real world'.

In practice, AGCAS has sought to bring together the strengths of the two traditions through a variety of training and development activities. Its subcommittees and working parties on a wide variety of different topics have in effect provided opportunities for professional development through sharing of skills in relation to particular tasks (see para 9.3). This and its other activities – including its links with CSU – have enabled it to act as a rich network for professional growth.

An AGCAS activity of particular importance has been its programme of short training courses to provide structured in-service training in particular skills. This has provided the basis for further professional evolution. In 1992, a Certificate and Diploma in Careers Guidance in Higher Education were launched by the University of Reading in association with (and on the initiative of) AGCAS to provide a more formal training and accreditation structure. Designed on an open-learning basis, they included validation of the AGCAS short courses, accreditation of prior learning, and also new opportunities for distance learning (Ford and Graham, 1994). An important principle was that careers advisers should be able to work towards these qualifications while remaining in post. To support the work-based learning, a mentoring scheme was developed under which trainees were supported by experienced practitioners (Graham, 1994).

The development of a qualification specifically for careers advisers in higher education reflected the professional maturation of careers guidance in higher education. Its flexibility enabled it to encompass some of the strengths of the tradition of the old appointments boards, but finally to set in motion the last rites for burying its amateurism.

Conclusion

The UK's higher education careers services are widely regarded overseas as a world leader. They are comparable with most USA services (see Herr *et al.*, 1993), with stronger patterns of inter-institutional collaboration. They are significantly more strongly developed than the comparable services in Australia (Kingston, 1989). In Europe, where similar services have in the past been rare, the UK services are increasingly being used as a model for development (Watts *et al.*, 1993; Raban, 1995). Graduates are less likely to be unemployed in the UK and USA than in any other OECD country (OECD, 1996, p.237). This is no doubt due to a variety of factors, but the investment made in careers services in these two countries is likely to be one of them.

THE CHANGING CONTEXT

Introduction

The changes in the roles of careers services outlined in Section 2 have taken place against the background of massive changes not only in higher education but also in the world of work. These changes are linked, and many seem set to continue. This section analyses briefly some of the trends which are most significant in relation to strategic directions for careers services in the future.

Careerquake

Recent years have seen a major transformation in the structures of work and of career. The traditional model of career was concerned with progression up a graded hierarchy within an organisation or profession. Such careers are being increasingly fractured by two linked forces: the impact of new technology, and the globalisation of the economy. Technological change continuously transforms the nature of work organisations; global competition places intense pressure on organisations to drive down costs, to innovate and to adapt. Government policy has sought actively to support such flexibility through deregulation of labour markets. It has also applied market disciplines to the public sector, through privatisation, internal quasi-markets and decentralised management, all designed to cut costs and improve efficiency.

As a result of these pressures, many organisations have engaged in 'delayering': devolving decision-making, and reducing layers of management or supervision. Clearly differentiated and discrete roles, and the orderly career paths that go with them, are increasingly being replaced by team-working and multi-skilling. Many organisations have also engaged in 'downsizing': reducing their number of core workers, and seeking to operate in more flexible ways through a growing contractual periphery. This takes two forms:

(a) 'Outsourcing' and contracting out to suppliers. As a result, more employees are now based in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), rather than large organisations; and more individuals are self-employed.

(b) Employers seeking more flexible working arrangements with their own employees. Accordingly, there has been a striking growth in the number of part-time workers, of 'teleworkers' operating from home, of casual workers, and of workers on short-term contracts.

The effect of these trends (see Collin and Watts, 1996) is a profound change in the 'psychological contract' between the individual and the organisation: the expectations each side has of the other. The old contract was a long-term *relational* contract, based on security and reciprocal loyalty. The new one is increasingly a short-term *transactional* contract, based on a narrower and more purely economic exchange. Even where the relational contract survives, it commonly involves exchanging job security for task flexibility (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). Either way, therefore, it needs to be constantly renegotiated. Individuals have to take more responsibility for their own career development, including learning new skills and knowledge. Security, it is argued, lies now not in *employment* but in *employability*: accumulating skills and reputation that can be invested in new opportunities as they arise (Kanter, 1989).

These changes represent a 'careerquake' (Watts, 1996c). The foundations of the traditional concept of career are being shaken and in many cases destroyed. In its place, a new concept of career is being built, redefined as the individual's lifelong progression in learning and in work. Supporting such careers is a major policy issue. High-level skills are increasingly recognised as the key to economic competitiveness in global markets (Porter, 1990). The Confederation of British Industry (1989) has advanced the concept of 'careers for all', based on continuous learning throughout working life, as the key to achieving the 'skills revolution' Britain requires.

Such arguments are closely linked to the expansion of higher education. The case for supporting such expansion from the public purse has been based not just on existing demand for high-level skills, but also on the notion that supply may create its own demand: that 'as more highly qualified persons percolate into areas previously dominated by persons without higher level qualifications this may change the nature of the work involved and in so doing generate more and better job opportunities in the future' (IER, 1997, p.4). Employers, it is argued, increasingly require employees who are flexible, can deal with change, and can anticipate and lead change; higher education can develop such attributes (Harvey *et al.*, 1997).

Changes in the graduate labour market

Linked to the careerquake have been massive changes in the nature of the graduate labour market. Recruitment into formal graduate training schemes within large companies is now confined to a small minority (see e.g. Connor and Pollard, 1996). Many large employers now also recruit graduates direct into jobs previously carried out by non-graduates. A study of two industries indicated that in the steel industry, employers had enriched and upgraded the posts, to the benefit of the industry; this had though happened to a much lesser extent in the financial services industry, where many graduates were being under-utilised in unmodified clerical-level jobs (Mason, 1995).

The major change, however, is the much greater number of graduates now entering work in SMEs. The proportion of graduates available for work recruited by members of the Association of Graduate Recruiters (mainly larger employers) has fallen from around 80% to around 50% over five years (AGR, 1995). A follow-up survey of Sussex graduates found that two-fifths were working in firms of under 200 employees, and 15% in firms of under 20 employees. More of the jobs taken by graduates in small firms were 'new jobs' that had not existed beforehand: an indication of the importance of the small-firm sector in job creation (Connor and Pollard, 1996).

The SME sector is very varied. It ranges from sole traders to companies with nearly 200 employees and mega-growth potential; from taxi firms to high-tech companies with world-wide reputations. Traditionally, however, small firms as a whole have not been major employers of graduates: the Labour Force Survey indicates that 8% of employees in establishments with under 25 employees are graduates, compared with 14% in larger establishments (quoted in Connor *et al.*, 1996). Often, too, they do not know how to make best use of the graduates they take on. This is partly because they tend to have a weak management structure, and cannot resource training or supervision. Policy attention has accordingly been drawn to ways of supporting SMEs in making better use of graduates, linked to stimulating innovation: careers services have become involved in some schemes of this kind (see para 8.7).

At the same time, more graduates are now entering work based on short fixed-term contracts. The follow-up study of Sussex graduates found that only 6% were self-employed, but that one in three were on fixed-term contracts, over half of which were at least 12 months' duration (Connor and Pollard, 1996). This is linked to the general trends outlined earlier (paras 3.3–3.4).

Changes in higher education

The changes that are taking place in the graduate labour market are due partly to changing demand but partly to changing supply. The huge expansion of the higher education system (see paras 2.8–2.9) means that the student population is becoming much more diverse. In particular, there are now many more mature students. The proportion of first-year full-time undergraduates who were aged 21 and over rose from 25% in 1989/90 to 35% in 1993/94. At the same time, the numbers of part-time students (the great majority of whom who were aged 21 and over) were rising faster than the numbers of full-time students (Connor *et al.*, 1996).

This greater diversity represents a significant challenge for careers services to respond to the needs of very different target-groups. There is also, for example, pressure to respond more strongly to the needs of the 4% of students who have a disability (Connor *et al.*, 1996), some of whom require very specific and intensive support. The increasing numbers of international students, too, pose new demands: while as a proportion of the student body they have remained steady at around 10%, their numbers increased by 40% between 1988/89 and 1993/94 (*ibid*).

The expansion of the student population has placed great pressure on resources in higher education. Public expenditure on higher education has not increased commensurately, and therefore the unit of resource per student has fallen. The value of student grants, too, has been considerably eroded. Many more students are now dependent on loans, and accumulate significant levels of repayable debt: a recent survey found that the average level of debt incurred by undergraduates during their courses was nearly £3,000 (Purcell and Pitcher, 1996). It seems likely that this trend will continue, and that students (and/or their parents) will in future be expected to pay a much higher proportion of the costs of higher education. This will produce a more consumer-driven system. It has indeed been suggested that such a system should be positively encouraged by channelling the remaining public funding through students in the form of credits, to reinforce and support their role as purchasers of the learning provision (CBI, 1994; TEC National Council, 1997).

Steps are also being taken to make higher education more flexibly responsive to the concept of lifelong learning. Its involvement in continuing professional development is growing. More generally, systems of credit accumulation and transfer are being developed to make it possible for students to move more easily in and out of the system, and within and between institutions. These systems, however, are still not strongly

articulated across institutions, and their relationship with the structure of National Vocational Qualifications is as yet unclear.

The concept of lifelong learning, together with the impact of information technology, means that higher education institutions are under pressure to 'reposition themselves within the wider learning support infrastructure which will underpin and resource a learning society of the 21st century' (TEC National Council, 1997, p.26). Links with work-based and home-based learning are likely to continue to grow.

The rigid boundary between further and higher education, too, is looking less tenable. Already there are increasing links and partnerships across the boundary: in 1994/95, 9% of higher education students in England, and 29% in Scotland, were based in further education colleges. Existing links include franchising, validation, access courses, and two-plus-two or two-plus-one progression arrangements: they mainly concentrate on HNC/D courses and professional qualifications, plus small amounts of degree work (Rawlinson *et al.*, 1996). The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has suggested that there should be 'a coherent national system for credit accumulation and transfer, enabling movement – in either direction – between further and higher education so that people can update or add to their knowledge and skills throughout life'. This should allow lateral as well vertical movement: 'not a ladder, but a ship's rigging'. It should mark 'the threshold of a new age of learning in which UK education becomes a seamless, lifelong process, accessible to all' (CVCP, 1996, pp. 8 and 10).

If such a system is to emerge, it will need to be based on more common funding structures, and on stronger patterns of local and regional co-operation. With the pressures on student finance and the growth in the number of mature students, more students are studying close to their home: in 1995 nearly half of UK students entering degree courses did so within their own region (UCAS, 1996). In some areas, plans are being laid to merge universities with further education colleges. To date, however, government policies have tended to inhibit rather than encourage such mergers.

All of these changes make the higher education system ever more complex. The moves towards greater integration are balanced by trends towards greater differentiation between institutions. Some institutions see lifelong learning and regional collaboration as their main future; others are continuing to concentrate more strongly on national and international recruitment of traditional 18-21-year-old students. In some cases teaching is the dominant activity; in others it tends to be subordinated to research. This means that careers services have to respond to a wide range of different institutional agendas.

Strategic issues

Strategic issues for careers services in higher education raised by the changes in the world of work and in higher education itself include:

(a) What are the implications of the changing concept of career for the ways in which careers services operate?

(b) What are the implications of the changes in the graduate labour market, and in particular the growing importance of SMEs?

(c) How are careers services to respond to the greater diversity of the student population in higher education?

(d) What are the implications of the moves towards a more flexible higher education system, integrated more strongly into wider structures for lifelong learning?

THE INSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF CAREERS SERVICES

Introduction

With funding being increasingly squeezed, institutions of higher education are scrutinising more carefully which activities are essential to their purpose, and which are additional activities that might be charged for separately or left to other organisations to undertake. Are careers services an integral part of a higher education institution, or are they an additional service which is open to review in terms of its specific costs and benefits?

The minimalist option

A minimalist view could be that the task of higher education institutions is to help students to get a degree, and that what they do with that degree is no part of the institution's responsibility. Under this view, the core business is teaching, or teaching and research, and those minimal support services which are necessary for this purpose. Any other activities which fall outside these narrow bounds should be cut, unless their costs can be covered in some other way – for example, being paid for by their direct beneficiaries.

An extreme version of this view is that the careers service should be cut altogether, or reduced to an information function serviced by the library, perhaps using Internet services along the lines of those currently being developed nationally through CSU. This is reinforced by the argument that if, as a result of their higher education, students are capable and enterprising, they should be able to find their own directions and their own jobs. It ignores the careers service's potential contribution to helping students to *become* capable and enterprising. If the arguments about the adequacy of the information function are applied to learning, they lead to the abolition of all face-to-face teaching. These arguments also ignore the considerable evidence of student demand, as indicated by usage levels of current services (see paras 2.17–2.18), and strongly reinforced within the student focus groups in the fieldwork for the present report.

If the desirability of a broader careers service is accepted, so long as its costs can be met from elsewhere, arguments might be mounted for it to be paid for from fees to employers. But:

(a) The effect of this would be that the current student-centred careers service would be replaced by a placement service addressed to employers' interests. In this case, the laws of the market would rule: students and career options that were less marketable, and/or were concerned with alternative values, would be ignored; in times of recession, when students' career-entry problems were most acute, the service would contract.

(b) It would be difficult for a single institution to go 'out of line' in this direction. If as a result of being charged a full market rate, employers ceased to use the service, it would be the institution and its students that would suffer. In effect, the attempt to market the careers service to employers as a separate product would jeopardise its function of marketing the institution's 'core product' – students.

In practice, therefore, institutions have tended to be cautious in testing what this particular market could bear, and to regard charges to employers – for participation in careers fairs, for example, or for hire of interview rooms – as marginal rather than core income (though in some of the larger services it is now sufficiently substantial to fund a post or two). Any moves to extend this could be regarded as restructuring the placement function, not the careers service as a whole (see paras 6.19 and 6.28). It has also been noted that employers contribute substantial amounts of time and expertise free of charge to careers programmes: at Newcastle, for example, it has been estimated that this amounts to £30–40k per year.

An alternative and possibly complementary argument is that the guidance and information services should be paid for directly by the students who use them and benefit from them. If institutions continue to be prevented from charging tuition fees, this is likely to create more pressure to identify activities which can be regarded as being outside tuition and therefore charged separately. A few careers services do indeed charge students a small registration fee. Again, however, this is viewed as marginal rather than core income. To charge full-cost rates would be likely to deter usage, particularly if this principle was not applied to all other student activities. If the institution has an interest in the successful career entry of its students, this could be seriously counter-productive. Again, therefore, no institution has found its early reflections on these issues sufficiently encouraging to give them detailed consideration.

The fundamental issue here is whether degree output is a sufficient outcome measure for higher education. There is clear evidence that in the eyes of those

outside higher education, it is not. Employability and career success are viewed as major outcomes which government, employers and students alike expect from higher education. The government, for example, has indicated that so long as higher education is funded from the public purse, the rate of return to the nation's investment will be defined largely in terms of graduates' economic impact (DfEE, 1997). Again, it is clear that most students undertake a degree on the understanding that it will help them to improve their prospects in the labour market. For a higher education institution to fail to address this expectation would seem politically unwise, and to weaken the marketing of its provision against its competitors.

4.7 This would seem to be particularly the case if, as seems likely, students and/or their parents are expected in future to pay a higher proportion of the costs of higher education (see para 3.13). In the USA, St John Fisher College in New York State has offered students a $5,000 refund on their tuition fees if they fail to land a job after six months (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 1/9/95). While not going so far as this, independent business schools in the UK charge sizeable tuition fees, and recognise that their students are very demanding customers: accordingly, the expenditure on careers services in the London and Manchester Business Schools in 1993/94 was £430 and £202 respectively per full-time-equivalent student, as opposed to an average of £29 for universities as a whole (CVCP/UFC, 1994). These are somewhat extreme examples, but potential consumers of higher education may in future give more attention to the extent and nature of career support before committing themselves to investing in a higher education course.

4.8 Careers services can indeed be viewed as a means of promoting the institution, its courses and its graduates to potential employers, in ways which also enhance its marketability to students. In an increasingly competitive market, in which employers are more and more wanting to target particular institutions and even departments, an institution which fails to promote itself in this way risks losing its market position.

4.9 The main public measure of performance in relation to employability is the first-destinations 'league table', published annually. These first-destination returns are widely viewed as one of the performance indicators by which higher education institutions should be judged (Joint Performance Indicators Working Group, 1994; Cave *et al.*, 1997). They are a crude measure, with doubts about their consistency across institutions (due to differences in the effectiveness of tracking procedures). They are collected over too short a period: it is widely recognised that a follow-on survey two years after graduation would provide a useful additional source of information, but issues relating to the cost, data collection and methodology (e.g. sampling) of such a survey have not yet been resolved; an alternative might be to extend the census data for the first-destination returns to twelve months after graduation. They are also much more responsive to the balance of courses (e.g. the proportion of vocational courses, and of sandwich courses) than to the quality of the careers service. Moreover, pursued too rigidly, they could undermine both the neutrality of the guidance that is offered (it may not always be in a particular graduate's interest to become employed immediately) and the collaborative structures of the AGCAS 'mutual aid' scheme (see para 8.6) (which could be seen as assisting the league performance of institutional competitors). Nonetheless, insofar as careers services are viewed as contributing to performance in this table, they are seen in concrete terms as assisting the reputation of the institution.

4.10 For these various reasons, it is unlikely in practice that institutions will want to dismantle their careers service. A more realistic possibility is that some may be tempted to retain a service at a minimal level designed to gain access to AGCAS/CSU resources and to provide an entry in the prospectus. This would represent a genuflection towards the symbolic value of a careers service, but without any serious intent to deliver a student entitlement of any substance. Income-earning from whatever source might be encouraged, not to develop and expand the service, but to reduce the institution's net contribution to its costs. Such institutions need to assess carefully the likely long-term implications of their short-term cost-cutting.

The outsourcing option

4.11 An alternative proposal for reducing costs has been to 'outsource' the service to an external contractor. This is an option receiving wider attention in higher education in more general terms: it has been suggested by some that if institutions are to concentrate on the primary tasks of teaching and research, all other activities – examinations, accommodation, counselling and registry functions, as well as careers services – should be contracted out. The argument is that this will reduce costs through economies of scale, tighter cost control, and reduced bureaucracy.

4.12 Within the careers guidance field, a precedent has been set elsewhere with the contracting-out by the government of the statutory Careers Service, previously run by Local Education Authorities. The establishment of a quasi-market has resulted in most of the contracts being awarded to the existing services restructured as non-profit companies based on various forms of partnerships between LEAs and TECs/LECs. There has also however been some *expansionism* (existing services being awarded contracts for areas other than their

own) and some *new entrants* from both the private and non-profit sectors (Watts, 1995; Chatrik, 1997).

A few higher education institutions have looked at the possibility of contracting out their careers service to an employment agency, to one of the new careers companies set up as a result of the process outlined in para 4.12, or to some other body. Contracting out to an employment agency would effectively mean replacing a student-oriented careers service with an employer-oriented placement service, and would therefore be open to the objections outlined in para 4.3 above. This is not however true of local careers companies, and some institutions have been attracted by these companies' contacts with local SMEs and knowledge of local labour markets: it is linked to the argument that the graduate labour market is not as segmented as it used to be (paras 3.7 - 3.9) and that the case for careers guidance in higher education being a specialist activity is not as strong as it was. Others examining the contracting-out option have been smaller institutions which have been particularly concerned about how to monitor quality standards and achieve economies of scale, including the benefits of differentiated staffing, with a small service of their own. Buckingham, for example, invited tenders from a careers company and another higher education institution, but decided in the end to keep its service in-house. Some US colleges, too, have looked at outsourcing, but have tended to pull back from it (Wertz and Jordan, 1996). In the UK, higher education careers advisers have expressed concern about the rigid accountability built into the statutory contracts for the careers companies, based upon outputs measured by the quantity of individual action plans, and its effects on professional practice.

The form of outsourcing which has proved most viable to date has been the practice of small institutions using the careers service of a larger institution of higher education, as part of a wider partnership relationship including validation of courses. This could be taken further: for example, neighbouring institutions within the same urban area might merge their careers services, so achieving economies of scale, more specialised support services, and greater capacity for innovation. In a sense, the University of London Careers Service provides a model for this, with the colleges funding a centrally-located service on a contract basis – though interestingly, since the colleges secured greater financial independence from the university, the trend has been for the careers service to strengthen its on-site provision within the colleges, and one college (Imperial) has withdrawn and set up a service of its own. It is worth noting in this respect the report of the Follett Committee (1993) on funding of libraries: it recommended that while there might be scope for local and regional co-operative arrangements between institutions, the responsibility for establishing such arrangements should belong to the institutions themselves, and the ultimate responsibility for meeting the library needs of its students should remain with the individual institution.

Even if institutions do not go down the outsourcing route, examining the *possibility* of outsourcing is regarded by some senior management as a useful exercise for benchmarking quality and for reviewing costs and benefits of existing provision: attention is therefore needed to alternative ways of providing such benchmarks (see para 9.18). If outsourcing the careers service as a whole is found to make little sense, there may be some *functions* that can be outsourced. Indeed, many careers services already do this to a limited extent: for example, outsourcing administrative and financial responsibility for career fairs or for 'career opportunity' publications funded by recruiters. The same is true of partnerships with other higher education institutions: even if full mergers are not regarded as likely to be fruitful, there may be some activities for which local or regional consortia are more effective than institutions operating on their own, particularly in the post-graduation field (see Section 6 and para 9.10b).

The rationale for institution-based careers services

The key argument against outsourcing of careers services is based on the benefits of embedding such services within the institution. These benefits were succinctly summarised by one service as follows:

- 'The preparation of students to make as productive and personally satisfying a contribution to the economy and to society as possible is an integral part of the function of HE institutions.'
- 'The processes of academic and intellectual development; the development of personal qualities and skills; evaluating one's intellectual and personal aptitudes and skills, and understanding their relevance to the world of work; a critical awareness of the range of opportunities available after graduation and of how to exploit them; and the development of a valid sense of occupational identity: all form an inseparable continuum.'
- 'The sense of belonging to an institution gives a clear focus to the organisation, direction and delivery of career guidance and provides the strongest incentive to its relevance, effectiveness and quality.'
- 'The ownership by an institution of its career guidance provider is the best guarantee that it shares the institution's aims and values.'

A further benefit is the organisational brokerage role outlined in more detail in para 6.26: providing information on the labour market to assist in academic planning, and an entry point to the institution for

employers. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for an outside organisation to play this role as effectively. The principal and vice-principal in one university noted the value of the careers service being able to 'filter the babel of employer voices', to relate this to the needs of the university through its close knowledge of departments and of students, and to apply this knowledge effectively because it 'knows how to get things done within the university'. They regarded the head of the careers service as an important intelligence source and a trusted policy adviser. Other institutions, however, have not seen the potential of careers services in this respect, and have not structured them in a way which enables them to play this kind of role.

4.10 Careers services have increasingly realised that if they are to justify and strengthen their place within their institution, they need to pay more visible attention to relating their work to its policies and institutional needs. This may include attention to objectives outlined formally in its mission statement (e.g. commitment to international activities and/or to regional activities) and to tuning into its 'hidden mission' (e.g. student recruitment needs). It may at times involve conflicts of interest. Wallis (1990), for example, has pointed out that 'our professional objectivity and impartiality can be compromised if our institutions insist ... that intending students are actually encouraged to register for our own courses rather than more suitable ones elsewhere'. This could have important long-term implications (see para 5.6).

Optimal location within institutional structures

4.11 If institutions are to embed careers services effectively, this has implications for where they are placed within the institutional structure, and with which other activities they are aligned. Three main alignments are evident at present.

4.12 The first is to align the careers service to other *student* services, including counselling and welfare services. This has been particularly evident in the former polytechnics, where an influential report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (1988) declared unequivocally that 'careers advisory work needs to be seen as an integral part of student services' and that 'a separately organised and located careers service is unlikely to be wholly effective' (p.12). It can work well, particularly where student services are regarded by senior management as important and are headed by someone who is influential within the institution and is interested in the careers service. It can also, however, result in the careers service being marginalised within a 'portacabin culture' as a bolt-on accessory, with a barrier of several layers of management before it can gain access to senior management. It tends to identify the careers service as essentially a service to individual students, outside the academic process.

4.13 The second is to align the careers service to other *academic* services, and to view an important part of its role as being to support the work of teaching departments, particularly in relation to the curriculum (see paras 7.24–7.31). This may include staff development and consultancy roles in support of developmental programmes in careers education or employability skills more generally. It may also mean involvement in course planning, feeding back data on the first destinations of students, and on students' and employers' perceptions of the employment value of the course provision: in some institutions, for example, the careers service is now a formal part of the consultation process for all new courses. Such alignment raises issues about whether the salaries of staff in careers services should be on academic rather than administrative scales.

4.14 The third is to align the careers service to other *marketing* services within the institution. Kirkman (1982) suggested that institutions should view careers services as their 'marketing department': 'careers advisers need to keep themselves fully informed about what the market requires, to ensure the information is fed back to their institutions, and to encourage the students and graduates with whom they are dealing to appreciate these requirements and to fit themselves to fulfil them'. This is linked with the role of careers services in promoting the institution, its courses and its graduates (see para 4.8). Accordingly, some institutions have located careers services as part of external/business relations. This has the potential merit of linking the recruitment needs of employers to other needs to which the institution might be able to respond – including research and consultancy services (see para 6.26b). It may also be extended to cover involvement in marketing institutions to potential students, including schools liaison work, access initiatives for non-traditional students, and overseas recruitment operations. As noted in para 4.18 (see also para 6.16), there may at times be conflicts between the service's guidance and marketing roles, in determining who is the primary client. On the other hand, there is also some common ground, and the possibility that guidance in its 'honest broker' role may prove more effective as a marketing device than 'hard-sell' approaches.

4.15 An alternative possibility is for the careers service to stand on its own, recognising that it is unique in being at one and the same time a student service *and* an academic service *and* a marketing service. This is a common model, particularly in the older universities. In some institutions it may raise the question of whether the service has enough 'critical mass' to flourish on a stand-alone basis. It is also linked to the posi-

tioning of careers services in relation to the strategic directions outlined in Sections 7 and 8.

4.24 Whatever its institutional location, the careers service needs to have strong links to senior management if the potential benefits of being institution-based, outlined in paras 4.16–4.17, are to be realised. Formal lines of reporting are critical: the fewer the managerial levels between the service and senior management, the more influential the service is likely to be. The pros and cons of different lines of reporting need to be carefully weighed: reporting to a registrar can be regarded by academics as identifying the service as an extraneous 'admin' activity which top-slices their budgets; reporting to a senior academic like a pro-vice-chancellor can mean that, since such posts rotate, relationships have constantly to be rebuilt from scratch. Much depends on the 'clout' and the level of interest of the individuals themselves. It is important for services to identify high-influence 'champions' rather than only working with low-influence enthusiasts. A lot rests on the skill of heads of careers services in understanding the power structures within the institution, and how best to influence them. Strong heads of service can command the respect among academics and senior management which enables them to influence the institution's strategic direction. Institutions which want their careers service to play this kind of role need to provide salary scales to attract heads of service of appropriate calibre (cf. para 9.13).

4.25 Formal representation on key academic decision-making bodies is also important. In a few universities the head of the careers service sits on Senate: this carries status as well as having functional value. Representation on faculty boards and course committees provides opportunities for careers service staff to act as informants and sources of expertise on graduate labour markets and employer demand, and on ways of increasing students' employability. The first-destinations data, for all their limitations (see para 4.9), are a valuable resource in this respect. Responsibility for the data has recently been moved to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, and the classification changes are widely felt in careers services to have made the data less useful for guidance and academic-planning purposes, as well as losing time-series continuity. Nonetheless, they provide a rich source of labour market information, and could probably be exploited more extensively, particularly if a stronger methodology was developed for comparing institutions on a confidential basis – as has been done, for example, in the case of the extensively-used ALIS system in relation to A-level data in schools and colleges (Fitz-Gibbon, 1996). Use of such data can be controversial, particularly in relation to departments with poor employment records: such departments may react aggressively, to 'shoot the messenger', and strong support from senior management is important in such situations.

4.26 A further useful management strategy, adopted in some institutions, is to have a careers board. This can be valuable in bringing together the key stakeholders (academics, employers, students), providing a forum for debate and influence, and building up 'champions' for the careers service. The submission of regular reports to such a board provides a mechanism for accountability and strategic review.

The devolution option

4.27 A final option is to seek to devolve the careers service's activities to teaching departments. Some take the view that links with employability and the labour market should be embedded as strongly as possible within teaching departments, and that the existence of a central careers unit may provide an excuse for departments to offload responsibility in this respect. The relative merits of centralised and decentralised careers services has long been debated in the USA (Herr *et al.*, 1993; Bechtel, 1993). Decentralisation operates most effectively in departments linked to a particular profession or a particular employment area (e.g. agriculture, architecture, education, medicine). In many other departments, however, academic staff are likely to feel that they have no interest or expertise in links with the labour market, and this can be reinforced by the weakness and/or diversity of such links.

4.28 In broad terms, three kinds of course can be distinguished in relation to the core careers-service activities outlined in Section 6 (Watts and Hawthorn, 1992):

(a) *Vocational* courses such as those mentioned in para 4.27, which are linked to a particular occupation, are essential for entry to that occupation, and are viewed as completing preparatory training for it. These departments tend to regard such delivery of the core as is necessary, especially placement into jobs, as part of their *own responsibility*, and only to refer to the careers service students who want to explore changes of vocational direction (whom the departments tend to regard as 'deviants' or 'drop-outs').

(b) *Semi-vocational* courses such as chemistry and psychology, where the course leads to a wide range of occupational fields, but with the expectation that it will be regarded as essential or desirable for entry to those fields, and as providing at least a relevant base for occupational training. Such departments tend to regard the core activities as being a *shared responsibility* with the careers service.

(c) *Non-vocational* courses such as English and history, where it is common for students to enter a wide range of occupational fields, to most of which the content of their course is irrelevant. Such departments tend to view the core activities as being the *careers service's primary responsibility*.

Steps can certainly be taken to encourage teaching departments to take more responsibility for careers matters. The minimal level tends to be a tutorial system which acts as a 'first-in-line' support for such matters as well as for personal and course-related matters, reinforced by the fact that most students tend to look to their tutor for a reference to support their job applications. This role can be developed further. For example, tutors tend to be the first port of call when students are selecting modules, or thinking of changing course, or thinking of dropping out, or at risk of failing examinations, all of which can have significant career implications. They are also the most natural sources of support for systems of portfolios and records of achievement (see para 7.10). But tutor systems tend to be very uneven in quality of delivery, and are in many cases straining or crumbling under the pressure of student numbers. The resource implications of serious quality control, let alone significant enhancement of functions, would be considerable.

Beyond this, some departments have nominated a member of staff as a careers tutor or careers liaison officer. Often this is little more than a 'postbox' role: displaying information received from the careers service or from employers, and making other liaison arrangements. In some cases, however, it may be more extensive (Watts and Hawthorn, 1992).

Increasingly, too, departments are seeking to incorporate elements relating to career education and to employability into their course provision. Careers services can play an important consultancy and/or delivery role in relation to such elements (see para 7.29). Certainly there is a strong argument for departments to take as much ownership of these elements as possible. Information technology could extend what is possible in these respects, providing ready access to expert systems. The possibility of networking the PROSPECT (HE) computer-aided guidance system could be particularly significant here.

In relation to such course provision, however, the evidence seems to be that departments require continued support from the careers service, partly to develop and share good practice, partly to provide expertise where it is needed, and partly to ensure that the provision is kept up-to-date in terms of changing labour-market needs. In addition, departments are unlikely to be able to provide the expertise in individual guidance, or the breadth of contacts with employers, that a careers service can offer. Their knowledge and contacts in occupational fields directly related to their discipline are likely to be matched by ignorance of unrelated areas, thus – unless complemented by a central careers service – seriously restricting the range of opportunities to which their students have access.

In general, therefore, it is unlikely that devolution of the full range of a careers service's activities would be of adequate quality or cost-effective in a large and diverse higher education institution, especially one containing a substantial number of semi-vocational and non-vocational courses. A possible variant is to adopt a devolved financial structure in which departments charge back for central services. Each department would then make its own decision as to whether it (a) does not offer careers education and guidance at all, (b) provides it itself, (c) buys in the institution's central service, or (d) buys a service from an external provider. It is likely that such a structure would produce very uneven quality of provision, with attendant problems both for students and for employers, as well as leaving very little scope for strategic planning at an institutional level.

Strategic issues

Strategic issues for institutions of higher education accordingly include:

(a) To what extent is providing career support to students regarded as part of the 'core offer' of the institution, or as an optional additional service?

(b) If it is an optional additional service, to what extent can employers and/or students be expected to pay for it, and what are the implications of exerting such charges?

(c) Would there be any advantages in 'outsourcing' parts or all of the service to an external supplier? What would be the disadvantages?

(d) If it is regarded as part of the 'core offer' and an embedded part of the institution, where is the service best located within the organisational structure to yield the potential benefits of such embedding?

(e) What links are needed between the careers service and senior management to realise the potential benefits of the service being institution-based?

(f) To what extent can the functions of careers services be devolved to teaching departments, and what forms of continuing expert support from careers services are needed by teaching departments to ensure quality of delivery?

THE NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

Introduction

Sections 2 and 4 have indicated the growing diversity of institutional policies and resource levels for careers services in different institutions of higher education. This diversity needs to be set within a national policy context. It raises issues about whether some standardisation of a student 'entitlement' is needed, and if so, how it can be delivered.

Recent government policy

Nationally, careers guidance is now much higher on the policy agenda. Its economic benefits have come to be widely recognised. These include reducing the cost of drop-outs from education and training and of mismatches in the labour market (Killeen *et al.*, 1992). The Confederation of British Industry has argued that high-quality careers guidance is one of the key building-blocks for the skills revolution that is required if the UK is to be economically competitive (CBI, 1989). There is also a more widespread recognition of the importance of careers guidance as a means of making the labour market, and the market mechanisms which have been applied by government to the education and training system, operate effectively by ensuring that the actors within these markets have access to information on the full range of opportunities (Watts, 1995). Careers guidance is now seen as an important means of yielding maximum economic benefits from the government's investment in education. These arguments have been reflected in a stream of government White Papers and initiatives.

Recent government policies in relation to careers guidance have appeared to be four-fold (Watts *et al.*, 1997):

(a) Support for guidance as an embedded part of publicly-funded educational provision.

(b) Entitlement to guidance from the statutory Careers Service, managed through contracts to careers companies (see para 4.12), for specified groups of clients – mainly young people.

(c) Effectively mandatory provision for the unemployed through the Employment Service, linked to benefit entitlement (some question whether this can be regarded as 'guidance' in the same sense as the others).

(d) In adult guidance, support for developing a two-level model: a foundation level comprising free access to information plus some limited guidance support; and a second level comprising a range of services (individual interviews, group sessions, psychometric tests, etc.) for which those who can afford to pay are expected to do so.

Higher education sits uneasily within this policy model. In relation to (a), careers education is now mandated in schools by legislation, and guidance is already mandated in further education through the Further Education Funding Council's funding, audit and inspection mechanisms; in higher education, on the other hand, institutions are effectively free to decide whether or not they regard careers education and guidance as part of their remit. Again, in relation to (b), the existing legislation explicitly defines the statutory Careers Service client-group as including all school pupils and most further education students, but as excluding those in higher education. In a formal sense, therefore, schools and further education offer students a dual entitlement, while higher education offers none.

The exclusion of higher education from the current legislation on the statutory Careers Service has two main rationales: the autonomy of higher education institutions, and the fact that most such institutions have historically provided specialist careers services for their students. Indeed, in the past, such services have tended to be rather better resourced than those available to further education students. Now, however, this is no longer always the case. If the government is concerned that students should have access to guidance as one of the means of yielding the economic benefits from its substantial investment in higher education, it should be troubled by the disparity of current provision, and the low level of provision in some institutions (see paras 2.18 and 5.14).

Such arguments will be given added impetus if post-Dearing strong moves are made towards a more integrated and consumer-driven lifelong learning system, with increased blurring of the boundaries between further and higher education, and with individuals moving much more flexibly in and out of different institutions (see paras 3.14–3.17). In such a scenario, there would be arguments for policies (b) and (d) and possibly (c) in para 5.3 above being integrated into a lifelong guidance service based outside institutions in order to assure its independence and impartiality in relation to educational choices. Erosions of the perceived impartiality of careers services within higher

education as they seek to justify and strengthen their place within their institutions (para 4.18) could reinforce these arguments: these erosions, seemingly marginal at present, would magnify in significance within a lifelong learning system. Such a lifelong guidance service could be an extension of the existing statutory Careers Service, perhaps working in partnership with others where appropriate. Alternatively, it could be built on a multiple-provider model based either on a collaborative approach or on a competitive market approach. The extent to which it might involve an element of fee-paying by the user is open to debate: experience so far is that individuals are unwilling to pay for careers guidance on more than a marginal-cost basis (see para 8.20), and that many of those who need guidance most are able to afford it least.

A lifelong guidance service of this kind could still be seen as complementing services based inside higher education institutions, as is currently the case in relation to schools and further education. It might however encourage institutions to review the nature of such services, perhaps moving more strongly towards one or more of the within-institution models outlined in Section 7, with the post-graduation models (apart from the alumni model) in Section 8 being undertaken by the external provision. Its effect could therefore be to split the current unitary careers services within higher education into the dual (partnership) model familiar in the other educational sectors. Some of these careers services have forged links with their local careers companies and other local guidance networks which should make such a split relatively easy to manage; in others, which have stood aloof from these networks and have confined their guidance networking to other higher education institutions, it could be more problematic.

An alternative to this model could be the voucher scheme recommended by the Confederation of British Industry (1994). This suggested that all students gaining a place in higher education would be given a credit to cover the costs of careers guidance, action planning and personal development. The careers credit could be used to purchase provision from a number of sources, including a careers service in their own or another institution, or the local careers company. The credit, it was argued, would make the student aware of the guidance provision available to them and would improve the quality of careers services by encouraging them to compete for custom on the basis of quality. This would, however, commodify and ration careers guidance, and separate it from the educational process. Moreover, the substantial experiments in adult guidance vouchers mounted by the government have provided little evidence of their claimed benefits. There was, for example, little sign that individuals felt empowered by their use of guidance vouchers. It was also not evident that they were currently capable of, or particularly interested in becoming capable in, making informed choices between competing *guidance* providers: what they wanted was assurance of high-quality guidance to help them in making informed choices between competing *opportunity* providers. An evaluation by Coopers & Lybrand (1995) concluded that 'while a charitable conclusion would be that the case for (or against) vouchers was 'not proven', our view is that it has been adequately considered, and tested, by pilots and found to be wanting' (p.65).

There are still many unresolved questions about all this. The case for a more coherent strategy for lifelong access to careers guidance is now widely recognised (CBI, 1993; Watts, 1994a; 1994b; NACCEG, 1996). The steps outlined in paras 5.6-5.8 would however require significant new investment from government. This would be the case even if some market elements were built into such a model. The government would almost certainly find it difficult to claw back any money from higher education funding for this purpose, since the Higher Education Funding Councils do not provide specific funding for careers services. This might limit the appeal of such a strategy to government.

Policy levers

If this is the case, attention might return to seeing what policy levers could be used to strengthen the role of careers services in higher education within the existing framework. Because of university autonomy, the policy levers available at present are limited. The funding councils provide a block grant; institutions decide how to spend it.

The main current lever is encouragement through the quality-assessment systems:

(a) The Teaching Quality Assessments carried out by the Higher Education Funding Councils. In England, for example, these include attention to 'curriculum design, content and organisation', which is defined to include opportunities for 'developing generic/transferable skills' and for 'progression to employment', as well as relationships with the 'world of work'; to 'student progression and achievement', which is defined to include 'development of... generic/transferable skills' and 'destinations – employment, further study, other'; and to 'student support and guidance', which is defined to include 'careers information and guidance' (HEFCE, 1994). In Scotland, assessment panels have to include an 'industrial assessor' who is expected among other things to look at student support in relation to quality of preparation for employment (SHEFC, 1996). These assessments have certainly encouraged many departments to pay more attention to careers services, to value their contribution, and to seek to strengthen relationships with them.

(b) Institutions' own quality-assurance procedures, supported by the Higher Education Quality Council. The HEQC (1995) guidelines on a quality-assurance framework for guidance and learner support included attention to guidance for career planning both in the on-programme phase and in the moving-on phase (see also HEQC, 1996b).

It is anticipated that the new Quality Assurance Agency which is replacing HEQC will bring these two systems together. They are not, however, linked to funding, except in the weak sense that if Teaching Quality Assessments find a department to be unsatisfactory, and no adequate remedial action is taken, the block grant is reduced accordingly (it is constructed on the basis of a formula which includes subject provision).

There seems little prospect at present of any funding formula based on separate funding for careers services: this would be seen as opening the door to a multitude of such 'special cases', and infringing university autonomy. In principle, however, the funding mechanism could be adjusted to include some element linked to student destinations. There is already an element based on the number of students *admitted*: this could be extended to cover the number of students who *graduate*, and/or the number who *secure jobs*, and indeed could 'leapfrog' to the latter if necessary. But admissions numbers are easy to define and to count. Monitoring of proportions getting jobs is more complex and more problematic. Would the short interval used for the current first-destination data (the end of the current year in which graduation took place) be regarded as adequate if funding depended on it? How would 'getting jobs' be defined: any kind of job? only graduate-level jobs? if so, what constitutes a graduate-level job? what about further study? Also, as we have seen (para 4.9), too much emphasis on such data might not always be supportive of good practice in careers services.

If a direct link to funding mechanisms is impracticable or inappropriate, a further approach might be through exhortation based on a staffing formula of some kind. These have been suggested in the past:

(a) The Heyworth Report, as already noted (para 2.7), recommended that the aim should be a staff:student ratio of 1 appointments officer (e.g. careers adviser) for every 100 final-year students 'available for employment'.

(b) In 1987, an AGCAS policy document on resource needs in careers advisory services in polytechnics recommended that there should be one careers adviser for every 1,000 full-time and sandwich students (equivalent to one careers adviser for 400 final-year students), plus one member of support staff for each careers adviser (with a minimum of two support staff in a service with only one careers adviser). This was based on a careful analysis of utilisation of staff time, including some group work, employer liaison, training, and other activities; it allowed for providing one-hour interviews to seven in every eight students, and giving them an average of 1.2 interviews each.

The 1994 AGCAS Resources Survey indicated a range from 1,000 to 7,251 full-time students per careers adviser. The distribution of UK institutions providing data was as follows:

No. of full-time students per careers adviser	*No. of institutions*
0 – 1,000	1
1,001 – 1,500	9
1,501 – 2,000	29
2,001 – 2,500	24
2,501 – 3,000	18
3,001 – 4,000	15
4,001 – 5,000	4
5,001 – 6,000	2
6,001 +	1
	103

(NB these figures excluded part-time students, and medicine, dentistry and veterinary science students).

Thus only one institution met even the 1987 polytechnic recommendation, let alone the Heyworth formula, even though the range of client-groups and functions carried out by careers services has expanded considerably since these ratios were calculated. The staff:student ratio tends, paradoxically, to be significantly lower at institutions whose students are already better equipped to get jobs in blue-chip and other high-status organisations (see also paras 2.17–2.18): the relative under-resourcing of careers services elsewhere accordingly reinforces, rather than compensating for, the disadvantage of their students (see para 9.9).

Estimates along the lines of those cited in para 5.13 could provide a useful external benchmark for institutions and their services. In view of the diversity of current and likely future provision, it might be useful to calculate estimates for a range of models, incorporating some of the variables that will be outlined in Sections 6–8. There has been concern in some careers services that estimates of this kind could lead to 'levelling down to the lowest common denominator'. Without some such benchmarks, however, it is difficult to demonstrate the implications of different funding levels.

A further approach used in the past has been to publish universities' expenditure on careers services per full-time-equivalent student. The most recent data, which did not include the ex-polytechnics, indicated a

range (excluding the independent business schools) from £43 to £16 (CVCP/UFC, 1994). Such data at least provide a basis for probing the reasons for the differences, though they too could be viewed as being open to the charge of 'levelling down'. They are no longer published: expenditure on careers services is now part of a much wider 'staff and student facilities' category (which also includes student offices in registries, housing offices, hall wardens, and chaplaincies).

An alternative approach, adopted by some careers services (e.g. Nottingham), has been to draw up statements of entitlement based on their current resource levels. This has the benefit of providing an internal benchmark against which the implications of any increases or decreases in funding and staffing can be demonstrated.

A final approach is to adopt the concept of a nationally applicable student entitlement. The Charter for Higher Education published by the then Department for Education in 1993 stated that 'you should receive well-informed guidance from your tutors and careers staff and appropriate access to counsellors'. This entitlement could be spelt out in more detail, and linked to a requirement for institutions in receipt of public funds to publish information in their prospectuses on the nature and extent of their careers service and associated activities, as well as on the first destinations of graduates from each of its courses. There could also be a right of redress for students, possibly through an ombudsman or conciliation service, if this entitlement was not delivered.

In reviewing these various approaches, attention should also be given to the need for stronger comparative data on the resourcing and operations of careers services. AGCAS has attempted to collect such data on a voluntary basis, but has experienced great difficulty in securing data that are consistent and comprehensive. If careers services in higher education are to be accountable not just within their institutions but in a national policy context, such data are essential.

Strategic issues

Strategic issues for government in relation to the national policy context accordingly include:

(a) Is current provision for careers guidance in higher education sufficient to yield the economic benefits from its investment in higher education?

(b) If not, what would adequate provision comprise, and how might it be secured?

(c) Should there be a lifelong careers guidance service based outside higher education institutions?

(d) What should be the relationship between such a service and careers services based inside higher education institutions?

(e) Should policy levers be used to secure a minimum standard of careers guidance provision within institutions?

(f) If so, which policy levers should be adopted?

(g) What comparative data need to be collected across institutions to monitor the effectiveness of such levers?

Careers services and their institutions need to take account of possible government reponses to these issues. They also need to bear in mind the possible national policy implications of their own actions.

ADAPTING THE CORE

Introduction

At an institutional level, strategic directions for careers services need to be reviewed in the light of the changes outlined in Section 3. We will start by reviewing the core activities of careers services as currently constituted, the relationships between these activities, and their viability for the future. This will provide a basepoint for reviewing more radical strategic options in Sections 7 and 8.

The traditional core

The traditional core role of careers services is boundary management: helping students to manage the choices and transitions they need to make on exit from their course in order to proceed effectively to the next stage of their career.

As noted in para 2.6, the Heyworth Report defined the core activities as comprising (i) interviews, (ii) information, and (iii) placement. Arguably these still provide the core. The AGCAS criteria for institutional membership require that the careers service should be 'constituted, resourced and empowered to co-ordinate the institution's degree level careers activities centrally' and should (my italics):

(a) 'Provide educational, vocational and careers *guidance.*'

(b) 'Maintain an *information* system, on open access to members of its institution.'

(c) 'Establish and maintain *contact with potential and existing employers* of the institution's graduates and with relevant professional bodies.'

In practice, all careers services now offer guidance not only through individual interviews but also through group sessions. The links with employers extend beyond placement. The Heyworth triad can therefore be redefined as comprising (i) individual and group guidance, (ii) information, and (iii) employer liaison and placement. Around these can be built a variety of other activities: the only one mentioned in the AGCAS criteria is professional responsibility for the collection, quality and interpretation of graduates' first-destination statistics.

There are however pressures on each aspect of the core, which are changing its nature and posing questions about its future form.

Individual and group guidance

Individual guidance is particularly cost-intensive. Activities here include:

(a) Long interviews (usually between 30 minutes and an hour), sometimes covering individual test sessions and mock selection interviews as well as conventional guidance interviews.

(b) Short 'duty adviser' interviews (usually 5-15 minutes), designed partly to respond to 'quick queries' and partly to diagnose students' guidance needs and signpost them to resources through which these needs might be met.

In addition, extensive use is now made of computer-aided careers guidance systems (see para 2.14). The shift of balance from (a) to (b) has already been noted (paras 2.13–2.18), and has gone much further in some services than in others. In some, there are still as many long interviews as short sessions; in others, particularly where a short diagnostic interview is required before access to a long interview is granted, the ratio has shifted to 1:4. There are even cases where the long interview is now barely advertised, and offered only in exceptional circumstances.

The shift of balance away from long interviews is viewed by some careers advisers and employers as a serious and regrettable erosion of the quality of the service provided to students; by others as a welcome move towards a more student-driven approach to career management, which is more in tune with the concept of student self-reliance. Students seem to welcome the immediacy of response which the duty adviser system permits. Services are able to see more students, and to reduce waiting lists for the long interviews. On the other hand, some careers advisers are concerned that the short sessions may be regarded by too many students as a *substitute* for long interviews, and for the opportunities for deeper and more probing reflection which such interviews can offer. Such advisers argue that ready access to a long interview at least once during a student's course ought to be an essential part of core service provision. Some further argue that it should include access to psychometric testing, including aptitude testing and personality analysis (offered only to a limited extent, if at all, in most services at present).

The diversity both of resources and of philosophical approach means that there is growing diversity of practice in the scale and nature of the individual

guidance that is provided. The 'entitlement' which is offered to students is likely to take very different forms in different institutions.

Group guidance programmes, too, are designed in part to achieve greater cost-effectiveness in the use of careers service resources. Activities here include:

(a) Developing careers education materials (self-instructional and/or for use in group work).

(b) Organising and/or running group sessions, ranging from general talks on graduate opportunities, through sessions designed to help students identify their transferable skills, to skills training on self-presentation in interviews and on application forms.

Extensions of such programmes – in the form of accredited courses and/or working through teaching departments – move beyond the core and will be considered later.

Information

Information activities include:

(a) Collecting, displaying and disseminating information resources on careers, employers, the labour market, self-employment, courses and funding.

(b) Developing additional information resources for customised use within the institution.

(c) Contributing to the development of AGCAS/CSU information resources to be made available to all careers services.

(d) Responding to information enquiries (in the careers centre, by telephone, by e-mail, etc.).

(e) Collecting, disseminating and interpreting information on the first destinations of graduates.

An important issue here is the balance between (b) and (c): between customised and national information resources. In principle, there is further scope for pooling of information resources, and for the development of high-quality resources at a national level, so reducing duplication. On the other hand, the growing diversity of higher education, the tendency for more students to seek jobs in local labour markets, and the competition between higher education institutions, all push in the opposite direction.

A further important issue is the impact of information technology on the way in which information is made available. This will be considered in more detail later (Section 10).

Employer liaison and placement

The employer liaison and placement activities include:

(a) Organising selection interviews on-campus (the 'milk-round').

(b) Arranging employer presentations.

(c) Organising careers fairs.

(d) Collecting, displaying and disseminating vacancy information.

The 'milk-round' has been in decline for several years, and in some institutions has disappeared altogether (in some it never existed). This is due to a number of factors:

(a) More large employers now recruit on a year-round basis to particular vacancies, rather than at a single point in time into a central graduate training scheme.

(b) More large employers now target particular institutions and even particular departments, and do not cast their net as widely as they did previously.

(c) More graduate employment is now in small and medium-sized enterprises (see para 3.8), which are unlikely to engage in 'milk-round'-type recruitment.

(d) The pressures of regular assessment stemming from modularisation and semesterisation have meant in some institutions that where 'milk-round' visits have continued, fewer students have responded to them.

The 'milk-round' still survives, particularly in some of the larger and older universities, but even here its role is more limited than it used to be. At Oxford, for example, which has one of the largest 'milk-rounds', the number of employers involved has declined from 259 in 1986 to 75 in 1996. Two other institutions offering time-series data have recorded declines from 158 to 111, and from 134 to 18, over the last six years.

Many larger employers, however, continue to give presentations to groups on-campus and to take part in careers fairs. The number of such fairs has grown: some are organised by individual careers services; some by regional consortia of services; some in conjunction with commercial partners. Some fairs are designed for current students: these tend to be concerned with publicising opportunities in a general way. Others are designed mainly for graduates: these tend to be more oriented towards direct recruitment.

The nature of employer liaison is also being affected by changes of structures within companies. The effect of downsizing and delayering (para 3.3) has

in some companies been a reduction in the level of experience and seniority of those responsible for graduate recruitment. Some companies are also beginning to 'outsource' at least the initial stages of the recruitment process to agencies. This erosion of professional structures on the employers' side makes the task of employer liaison more difficult for careers services, and more time-consuming to manage.

On vacancy distribution, careers services distribute information on vacancies notified direct to them, plus information on vacancies publicised nationally through CSU. These represent a weak form of placement: students are free to apply where they wish, and careers services only seek to influence the process through the general guidance they give to students. A stronger form of placement would require offering a more specific pre-selection filtering process. At the time of the Heyworth Report, some university appointments boards provided such a process (UGC, 1964, p.83). Nowadays, however, careers services in general do not seek to do so, partly because of the logistics of student numbers, but mainly because they more clearly define their primary client as the student rather than the employer. Their primary concern is to offer *impartial* help to *all* their students, rather than to help employers to target the 'best' students.

The lack of a pre-selection role explains why employers are sometimes reported as being disappointed by the service offered to them by careers services. A Kadence (UK) survey, for example, found that nearly two-thirds of the personnel managers who had used careers services rated them as poor (*Guardian*, 24/10/96). Arguably, this represents a misunderstanding of the role of careers services, evaluating their performance in relation to a service they do not purport to offer. Nonetheless, it leads to employers adopting alternative strategies, including:

(a) Building links with teaching departments (particularly in vocational or semi-vocational subjects), which are sometimes more prepared to adopt an informal pre-selection role.

(b) Using student placements as a filtering process.

(c) Using recruitment agencies to target and sift students.

All of these can circumvent the traditional placement role of careers services.

Such circumvention is particularly likely in the case of small and medium-sized organisations (SMEs). A focus group of people working with such organisations indicated that they tend to recruit at skilled and professional levels either through recruitment agencies, where they pay substantial fees, or through personal networks. They are inclined to be suspicious of free services as not sufficiently responsive to their needs, in terms of pre-selection and immediacy. Contacting teaching departments could seem more attractive, as an extension of the networking approach which is more familiar to them. If SMEs use a service, they prefer to be the customer, where they can 'make the service jump': they are prepared to pay for this.

These lines of thinking lead to three radical options in relation to the placement operation, all mentioned in the course of the project interviews:

(a) Restructuring it as a separate service, paid for by employers, and set up to pay primary attention to employers' needs.

(b) Outsourcing it by offering facilities for one or more recruitment agencies to operate on-campus.

(c) Viewing it as a more proactive brokerage role, seeking to market the institution's 'product' (its graduates) and to enable employers to find the recruits they need.

Some independent business schools have adopted option (c); it is, however, very labour-intensive and there must be doubts, even if it were considered desirable, about how effectively it could be adapted to the massive numbers of students in higher education as a whole. The other two options seem more immediately feasible, but raise issues about the risks of moving towards a less student-centred approach, and of separating placement from guidance.

The relationship between guidance and placement is complex. The argument for combining them in a single service is that they are complementary activities, and that their combination ensures that the guidance offered is kept in close touch with the needs of employers and the realities of the labour market. There are however limitations in this respect, because careers services' placement activities have always been much stronger in some sectors of the graduate labour market than in others. In effect, therefore, the integration of guidance and placement is confined to these sectors. This explains the common complaint, voiced in the project's student focus groups but also in other studies (e.g. Harvey *et al.*, 1997, pp.105–106), that careers services are viewed as being much more 'geared up' on opportunities in the corporate sector than in areas like the media, the arts, and voluntary organisations – and indeed in SMEs more generally – where students receive general guidance support from careers services but commonly have to seek out placements for themselves.

This issue takes different forms in different institutions, because of the growing practice by larger employers of targeting a small number of institutions (Connor *et al.*, 1996). In institutions which are strongly targeted by companies with extensive resources to

promote their opportunities, the danger is *distortion*. In institutions which are not targeted in this way, the danger is *starvation*: that the services feel increasingly 'out in the cold', deprived of the contacts with employers which keep them in touch with the labour market.

In response to these problems, a number of careers services have taken proactive steps to build up their knowledge of, and links with, SMEs. This is not easy, because it is resource-intensive work, and careers services' ways of operating have been much more attuned to the large-company culture. Some have developed databases of local SMEs, sometimes on a consortium basis with other institutions, and/or with bodies like the local TEC/LEC. Some, too, have become involved in national or local projects designed to provide structured work placements in SMEs: this again, however, begins to move beyond the core (see para 8.7). The future of the placement role in relation to SMEs is part of the wider issue of finding new ways of maintaining labour market information across the full range of the graduate labour market, keeping careers services in touch with the ways in which it is changing. The first-destinations data (see para 4.25) are a valuable source in this respect.

Supplementary activities

Around the core activities, a wide range of supplementary activities has been developed. These fall into three broad categories:

(a) Additional services offered to students.

(b) Making the core activities available to other client groups.

(c) Playing a broader brokerage role between the institution and employers.

The range of such activities, and the level of resources invested in them, vary considerably between careers services.

The *additional services offered to students* (directly or indirectly) can include:

(a) Involvement in information and guidance activities pre-entry (with sixth-formers etc.), and with students who are considering module choices or changes of course.

(b) Arranging course-related placements, and/or placements into part-time and vacation jobs.

(c) Teaching accredited career-planning courses, and/or supporting teaching departments in incorporating careers education elements within their courses.

(d) Provision of inter-disciplinary programmes of career insight courses, work shadowing and mentoring schemes.

The extent of such work tends however to be constrained by resources and, in the case of (a)–(c) in particular, by the existence of other activities within the institution – in the form of central units and/or at departmental level – in these areas. If careers services develop significantly in one or more of these directions, this is likely to have significant implications for their shape and nature. Such possibilities will be explored in Section 7.

The core activities have also been made available to a number of *additional client-groups*. These can include:

(a) Alumni of the service's own institution.

(b) Graduates of any higher education institution for a limited period post-graduation, through the AGCAS 'mutual aid' scheme (see para 8.6).

(c) Unemployed graduates in the local community, perhaps through a TEC/LEC-funded adult guidance programme.

(d) Research-contract staff within the institution, linked to the Concordat on their career development (see para 7.33a).

Again, there are resource constraints, and in some cases competitive constraints, on the extent of such activities. As limited supplementary activities, they may be feasible within current structures. But significant scaling-up in any of these areas is likely to have major structural implications. Scaling-up of (d) will be explored towards the end of Section 7; scaling-up of (a)–(c) in Section 8.

So far, careers services have been viewed here essentially as services offered to individuals. They can, however, be viewed as an *organisational brokerage operation*: a student-centred janus-like interface between the institution and employers which is at once broader and looser than the potential brokerage role outlined in para 6.19c. In this view, the service operates primarily for students, but also offers an important two-way communication channel between the institution and the labour market:

(a) For the institution, providing information on the labour market to assist in academic planning. This may include representation on academic boards, course advisory groups, and the like. The data on first destinations of graduates are particularly helpful in this respect (some services publish a report which itemises destinations of graduates from each course, student by student). More broadly, no other part of the institution is likely to have the *range* of employer contacts that the careers service has. The role may be confined to information feedback, or may be a more extended engagement in course planning to improve students' employability:

substantial moves in the latter direction may again have structural implications (see paras 4.21 and 7.24–7.31).

(b) For employers, providing a 'one-stop shop' which will point them to places in the institution where their needs can be met. This is valued because employers can only manage a finite number of ongoing relationships. It may involve an element of informal consultancy: for example, testing out ideas for possible new recruitment strategies. It may also extend beyond recruitment to facilitating other links – in teaching or research, for example.

The extent to which services are viewed in these terms, and their responsiveness to such expectations, varies considerably. The essence of the role is that it retains a balance between 'looking out' and 'looking in': the service's authority within its institution stems significantly from its links with employers; its authority with employers stems significantly from its contacts with students and its links with, and intimate knowledge of, the institution. Strengthening the links on both sides of the boundary is, therefore, mutually beneficial, but needs to be carefully balanced. If the balance is upset, the boundary position is eroded, and the authority weakened.

Will the core hold?

Many careers services and stakeholders believe that the synergy between the three elements of the core is critical: that each is complementary to the others, and that the essence of any viable future strategy is to maintain the relationships and balance between them. The triad is seen as a three-legged stool: if any of the legs is removed or seriously attenuated, the stool will fall. The balance is not always, however, easy to achieve. When asked what the 'irreducible core' of careers services provision would comprise, managers of careers services answered in different ways. Some saw information as the core, with placement and guidance built around it. Some saw 'duty adviser' sessions as the core, helping students to access the range of other resources. Some saw the long interview as the core, with other activities working off it ('we forsake it at our peril'). Some saw group sessions and information delivered electronically as providing the future core. All these tilt the core in different directions, and suggest that it may be difficult to maintain in a consistent and stable state.

A few institutions have taken the view that a clearer separation of the functions, perhaps within distinctive units under the same managerial 'roof', would reduce the tensions between them and enable each to play to its strengths. For example, Plymouth is considering the promotion of its careers service as an Assessment and Diagnostic Centre, and setting up a separate Placement and Recruitment Service, which may offer pre-selection, testing for employers, and presentations of relevant CVs on disk/database for employers' use (*Phoenix*, September 1996). Some other services are thinking of other forms of splitting the core, in order to ensure its survival and growth, or of moving away from it into a more radical restructuring. The latter possibilities will be explored in the next section.

Strategic issues

Strategic issues relating to the core accordingly include:

(a) What is the balance to be between (i) individual and group guidance, (ii) information, and (iii) employer liaison and placement?

(b) Are current employer liaison and placement activities, supported by the first-destinations data, sufficient sources of labour market information, and if not, how are these sources to be boosted and/or supplemented?

(c) Should the core activities continue to be integrated in a single service, or be given a greater degree of organisational separation?

BROADER STRATEGIC OPTIONS: I. WITHIN INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

There are compelling reasons for careers services to confine themselves to the core activities outlined in Section 6. The perceptions and expectations of careers services held by students, academic staff and employers tend to refer to these core activities. Diversification of activities can mean spreading resources too thinly. As two services commented in their evidence to this inquiry:

> 'We should not be tempted into offering "all things to all men". Staffing levels would become even more overstretched, delivering core services could be compromised and this may lead to calls for deinstitutionalising careers services. It is naive to think we would be granted sufficient staff in future to cater for all requirements.'

> 'For too long we have tried to be "all things to all people", which has resulted in a continual widening of our work and a further stretching of already scant resources. We must look to re-establishing the core areas of our work.'

At the same time, however, there is a risk that adhering to a core built around students' exit from their courses will be increasingly outflanked. The shift towards a more flexible and student-driven system of higher education in which employability concerns are more pervasive is likely to mean that services focused exclusively on the exit point will have a more limited role to play. If this shift continues and accelerates, careers services based narrowly on this model could find themselves marginalised.

In principle, many of the current changes greatly extend the scope for utilising the experience and expertise of careers services. But some may need to find new forms to take advantage of these opportunities. Unless they do so, the danger is that they fall into some or all of the number of traps:

(a) Becoming preoccupied with 'firefighting' activity, responding reactively to external pressures.

(b) Attempting to move in too many directions at once.

(c) Feeling guilty that they are missing opportunities.

(d) Feeling increasingly stretched, and anxious that the quality of the core is not being maintained.

(e) Feeling resentful of incursions of others on to what they feel should be their territory.

(f) Becoming preoccupied with survival ('defending the right to exist') rather than identifying a sense of purpose ('looking for growth').

All of these traps can make it difficult to find space for the strategic thinking and management of change which alone can make it possible to avoid or escape from them.

The issue is more acute in some institutions than in others. Paradoxically, the institutions in which there is greater scope for careers services to play broader and more diverse roles tend also to be the institutions in which they are least well resourced to take advantage of these possibilities. At universities like Cambridge and Oxford, the scope for linking employability concerns to the curriculum is very limited: a strong but bounded careers service becomes a means of addressing such concerns but also containing them. At the newer universities, on the other hand, the boundaries around the careers service may be much more permeable, but its level of resource tends to be lower, and its functions more open to competing claims from other parts of the institution. It accordingly has greater *opportunities*, but is also subject to greater *threats*. The model offered by the more traditional universities may be an exemplar for such institutions, but may also be a distraction which inhibits them from finding a model more appropriate to their own needs.

In broad terms, there are seven major strategic directions for careers services which potentially could lead towards a major restructuring of such services. They are not mutually exclusive. All represent activities in which careers services are already engaged to a greater or lesser extent (see paras 6.23–6.25). All can, therefore, be built around the core, with beneficial synergy from and to the core activities. On the other hand, it may be difficult to scale them up within an integrated organisational structure (see paras 7.35–7.37). Indeed, all are areas where there may be existing alternative roles and structures in place. They represent strategic directions for careers services; they also represent functions which institutions may prefer to carry out in other ways, or (in some cases) not to engage in at all.

Of the seven options, four represent stronger embedding *within* the higher education institution:

(a) The integrated guidance model.

(b) The integrated placement model.

(c) The curriculum model.

(d) The learning organisation model.

The other three represent different models for delivering careers services *post-graduation*:

(e) The extended-support model.

(f) The lifelong guidance model.

(g) The alumni model.

In this section, the four 'within-institution' models will be discussed in turn, drawing on examples of existing practice but examining their broader potential and implications. The three post-graduation models will then be examined in Section 8.

The integrated guidance model

In the integrated guidance model, the careers service becomes an integral part of a continuous guidance process covering educational as well as vocational choices, and available to students pre-entry, on entry, and throughout the student's course, as well as on exit from it. It is the model adopted in further education by the Further Education Funding Council in its funding, audit and inspection procedures (Hawthorn, 1996); in higher education it has been particularly encouraged by the Higher Education Quality Council (1995b) in its quality-assurance guidelines on guidance and learner support. The process is designed to help students to construct learning programmes which are related to their career aspirations as well as being intellectually coherent, and then to move on to the next stage of learning and/or work related to achieving those aspirations.

The model is linked to the shift towards a more flexible and student-driven higher education system, in which individuals are able to move more easily in and out of, and across different parts of, the system. In particular, it is related to the move towards modular structures and towards credit accumulation and transfer systems (see paras 3.15–3.17). Without adequate guidance support, such systems and structures are likely to lead to incoherent learning programmes. The coherence needs significantly to stem from – or at least be related to – the individual purposes for which the learning programme is being used. Effective guidance is needed to enable students to clarify and reality-test these purposes, to construct the learning programme that will best achieve such purposes, and to review them on an ongoing basis.

In its pure form, such structures are viewed by some as providing the possibility of a managed internal market within an institution, using credit-related modules as units of currency (HEQC, 1994; 1996a). This is linked to an external market in which these units can be traded across institutions. Guidance becomes a market-maker: a way of making the markets work by ensuring that individuals make well-informed choices from the full range of provision (Watts, 1995). Such guidance needs to be impartial, and not influenced by provider interests. Guidance services are needed in the community to service the external market (see para 5.6), but also within the institution to service the internal market. These services should be independent of the learning provision, to assure their impartiality. They need to be well-informed both about the learning provision and about its relationship to labour-market demand.

The model can be extended further if a broad view is taken of student learning experiences, to include experiences outside as well as inside the formal curriculum. Under this view, students should be encouraged at an early stage to identify the skills, knowledge and range of experience they want to develop for employability and other purposes, and then to identify ways in which these can be acquired. This may include not only course provision but also involvement in student societies and other student activities, and part-time and vacation work placements. In short, they should be helped to plan their 'student career'. Portfolios and records of achievement can then provide recognition of these experiences and the learning they have produced. Students' unions are becoming increasingly interested in providing active support for developments of this kind.

In practice, however, progress in these various directions is still limited. Modularisation has been introduced in many institutions, but in many cases offers 'phantom' choice and 'phantom' flexibility (Watson, 1989; HEQC, 1994), with departments ring-fencing what students can choose – partly in the interests of intellectual coherence, but partly to protect their units of resource. Educational guidance is regarded as the responsibility of personal tutors, who are usually based in the student's host department and therefore cannot readily claim impartiality; also, as noted earlier (para 4.29), the tutor system is in many cases beginning to strain or crumble under the pressure of student numbers. Where modular structures are more open and progressive in nature – mainly in some of the newer universities – systems of educational guidance and learner autonomy have begun to be created. On the whole, however, these systems have been kept separate from careers services (HEQC, 1994), partly to avoid being tarred by association with what may be seen as a narrow utilitarian emphasis on job relevance: it is feared that such association would increase academics' resistance to change. Yet this institutional splitting of educational guidance and careers guidance reinforces the separation of, rather than helping students to explore the relationship between, their learning and their career aspirations. Far from enabling the claimed

benefits of a more student-driven system to be achieved, it inhibits their achievement.

7.15 The role of careers services in relation to an integrated guidance model is therefore still restricted. There is some involvement pre-entry, but mainly this involves giving talks to sixth-forms and access courses, and on open days. Some careers services are involved in induction programmes for new students. Many will also see students, on a referral or self-referral basis, when they are concerned about the career implications of their course choices; this however is usually a reactive role, and accordingly limited in scale.

7.16 There are though a few examples of institutions beginning to move towards aligning careers services more strongly with systems of guidance and learner support. At Luton, the careers service has been incorporated into a Department of Quality Assurance which also includes the modular credit scheme, and access and admissions. At Cheltenham and Gloucester, consideration is being given to relocating the careers service into a Faculty of Modular Scheme Management, along with the provision for access and for academic counselling. Such moves represent steps towards a more integrated guidance model.

The integrated placement model

7.17 In the integrated placement model, the careers service's involvement in placement on graduation (see paras 6.12–6.22) becomes part of an integrated placement operation which also includes course-related placements, and placements into part-time and vacation jobs.

7.18 The pressure to offer work-based placements as part of undergraduate courses is growing. The TEC National Council (1997), for example, argues that there should be a national requirement for all degree courses to include a work-based project. Surveys indicate that employers increasingly want recruits to be effective and 'workplace-ready' from the outset. Work-based learning placements are overwhelmingly encouraged by employers as a way of developing such effectiveness and readiness (Harvey and Green, 1994; Harvey *et al.*, 1997). They not only say it is important but also actively use it as a recruitment criterion. Students who have had such placements are more likely to have had a job offer (Purcell and Pitcher, 1996). Indeed, many employers use placements as a means of screening students as potential recruits.

7.19 Course-related experiences of work can take a variety of forms. These include one-year 'sandwich' placements, short work-experience placements during term, vacation placements, work shadowing, and work-based projects. Some are concerned with meeting professional bodies' requirements for professional practice; some with providing broader opportunities for exploring the interaction between theory and practice; some with simply extending students' experience and enabling them to explore a career area of interest (Watts and Hawthorn, 1992). In some cases, however, difficulties are experienced in securing adequate numbers of such placements: there are concerns about whether employers' demands to extend them will be matched by employers' willingness to provide them.

7.17 Alongside these course-related placements, most students find their own part-time and vacation jobs, mainly for financial reasons. Student vacation jobs are a well-established feature of the labour market (Ball, 1988). But the erosion of student grants (see para 2.13) has meant that the pressure to earn money during one's course is now much greater than before. This may include not only vacation jobs but also part-time jobs on-campus or in the locality.

7.18 The course-related placements tend to be mandated and primarily for learning purposes, while the student-initiated placements tend to be voluntary and primarily for earning purposes. The categories, however, increasingly overlap. Schemes have been established to create vacation jobs which are designed to provide good career development experiences as well as a source of income: examples include the Shell-sponsored STEP programme of placements in small and medium-sized enterprises, and Oxford's Vactrain scheme which is designed to offer career-related opportunities in a variety of professions and locations. Opportunities for part-time jobs can be viewed partly in financial terms, but some may also be viewed as opportunities for skill development which can be accredited or 'recognised' in some way. Here they begin to overlap with other student-development activities carried out on a voluntary basis. On-campus jobs (including jobs within the careers service itself) can be evaluated within a compensatory model, in which they are required to provide some mix of quality experience, 'recognition' and pay, with the lack of any one of these being compensated by the others.

7.19 Despite these various overlaps, the placements tend to be managed within institutions by different services. Course-related placements are usually managed by placement tutors within departments or within faculties. Efforts have been made in several institutions to provide stronger co-ordination across departments, but even developing databases of employer contacts is difficult: departments tend to protect their contacts jealously. Co-ordinating mechanisms are often quite separate from careers services.

7.20 In relation to part-time jobs, there has been a rapid growth in the 1990s of student employment ser-

vices. An unpublished AGCAS survey in February 1996 identified 42 such services: 16 based in student unions, 17 in careers services, 4 in personnel departments, 4 in other parts of the institution including student services, and one (at Luton) established as an outpost of the Brook Street Bureau. Locating them in the careers service can encourage students to visit the service, and make it easier to provide the full range of vacation and part-time opportunities in one place. Locating them in student unions, on the other hand, may make them more accessible to students. Location need not necessarily equate with management: a service located within a union could be managed wholly or partly by the careers service and perhaps viewed as a careers-service 'outpost' in broader terms than temporary employment.

7.21 At present there is considerable fragmentation of these various services. It may be possible to find a careers service focusing mainly on job placement on graduation, an industrial placement officer attempting to co-ordinate course-related placements, teaching departments managing their own placements outside this structure, a student employment service based in the students union, and a personnel department offering part-time jobs on campus, all co-existing within the same institution, with no strategic links between them.

7.22 Yet in principle the potential for synergy is considerable. For example, links with local SMEs to secure part-time or vacation jobs can be viewed as part of a strategy to encourage them to take on more graduates on a long-term basis. Since all the categories overlap, bringing them together within an overall strategic framework could maximise the benefits of such overlap, enabling the learning and career-development potential of all placements to be harnessed to the full, and balanced appropriately with their earning potential. Moreover, many employers would welcome greater co-ordination of the approaches made to them.

7.23 This leads to the notion of a single co-ordinated structure, focusing on student placements of all kinds. The careers service might *become* the structure, in which case the placement side of its activities would be considerably extended: this is happening in a number of US universities (Shea, 1995). Alternatively, it might be *linked with* whatever structure is developed.

The curriculum model

7.24 In the curriculum model, the careers service becomes part of a delivery vehicle for, or part of a service designed to support academic departments in, incorporating employability skills and career management skills into course provision. This model is more complex and multi-faceted than the others, and could take a variety of different forms.

7.25 In recent years, there has been a growing consensus that greater attention should be given to the generic skills that are developed by higher education alongside the specific knowledge content of courses. A variety of different names have been used to describe these skills: enterprise skills, personal transferable skills, key skills, core skills, employability skills. Drawing from a variety of such lists, Purcell and Pitcher (1996) divided them into three groups: traditional academic skills (research skills, critical analysis, etc.), personal development skills (independence, self-reliance, etc.), and enterprise skills (interpersonal skills, time-management skills, etc.). The lists are linked to the concept of 'graduateness': the generic attributes that all graduates should be expected to possess (HEQC, 1995a). In significant measure, however, they have been derived from the stated requirements of employers (e.g. Harvey and Green, 1994; Harvey *et al.*, 1997).

7.26 Alongside the pressure to make such skills more explicit has come pressure to define the learning outcomes more clearly, to give the skills more attention in course design, and to find ways of assessing the extent to which they have been achieved. Some academics resist such pressures as additional impositions and distractions; others welcome them as ways of enhancing the quality and utility of their courses. The emphasis is strongly on seeking wherever possible to embed the skills in the teaching-and-learning processes of mainstream courses; there may also, however, be some need for enhancements of, or additions to, such curricular provision, plus some recognition and (where possible) accreditation of the skill development that is fostered through activities outside the formal curriculum.

7.27 In some institutions, careers services have been key 'message-bearers' about the importance of such skills in the eyes of employers, and have played a significant role in debates about how the delivery of the skills should be addressed (Watts and Hawthorn, 1992). Elsewhere, however, there has been a concern not to give the careers service too much prominence in these debates, on the grounds that this would enhance academics' resistance to excessive emphasis on the employment voice and would also provide a means of marginalising this voice.

7.28 In addition to their general 'message-bearing' role, careers services have a special interest in a particular group of these skills, now commonly referred to as 'career management skills'. These were defined by the Association of Graduate Recruiters (1995) as self-reliance skills which enable people to manage the processes of career progression and effective learning: the skills listed comprise self-awareness, self-promotion, exploring and creating opportunities, action planning, networking, matching and decision making, negotiation, political awareness, coping with uncertainty, development focus,

transfer skills, and self-confidence. Such skills can be viewed in two ways:

(a) As a subset of employability skills.

(b) As a separate set of metaskills which enable people to develop and use the full range of their other skills.

Porrer (1997) has provided a succinct rationale for them, suggesting that whereas the *old* formula for career success for graduates was a degree, and the *new* formula is a degree plus transferable skills plus work experience, the *future* formula will be these plus career management skills. The reason is the 'careerquake' (see paras 3.2–3.5).

7.10 In relation to career management skills, careers services can claim particular expertise. They have for some time run group guidance and careers education programmes designed to develop many (though not all) of these skills (see paras 2.11 and 6.8). These have included one-off sessions and free-standing activities like Insight courses. In some institutions, they have developed into major efforts to mount systematic teaching programmes, either as part of the services' own provision or by supporting teaching departments in incorporating such programmes into their courses. Such activities have been given significant encouragement by the Enterprise in Higher Education programme (Watts and Hawthorn, 1992; Ball and Butcher, 1993), and by the current DfEE-funded Career Management Skills Programme. A survey by AGCAS (1995) identified 24 institutions offering careers education modules within a unitised/modular degree programme, 48 providing career planning units within courses, and 42 carrying out consultancy work with academic departments to develop careers education within courses, as well as a variety of other kinds of programmes.

7.11 Such activities pose questions about the positioning of careers services within institutions. The more they get involved in teaching-and-learning activities, the stronger the case for defining them not as a student service, but as an academic unit or academic service (see para 4.21). This is particularly the case if the activities are assessed and accredited (the feasibility and desirability of assessment and accreditation in the area of career management skills are still matters of debate). In some cases, e.g. Leeds and Staffordshire, careers services have begun to receive income for the modules they teach. At Central Lancashire, however, this has not proved possible because of the university policy that there should be a clear line between teaching activities in faculties and service activities run by service departments: accordingly, a Career Development Unit has been set up within the Business School, with a secondment from the careers service, to develop stand-alone modules in career management skills plus franchised provision for other departments.

7.12 An alternative option is to integrate the careers service into a unit concerned with the broader 'skills' agenda. Several institutions have set up such units, sometimes in the wake of the Enterprise in Higher Education programme to maintain its momentum, but sometimes without this stimulus. At Liverpool Hope, for example, the careers service has become part of the Department of Personnel and Professional Development which focuses on all aspects of teaching and learning (*Phoenix*, June 1996). At Leeds Metropolitan, the careers service has been incorporated into the Academic Quality and Development Office. Such moves may in some cases mean that the careers service begins to lose its separate identity; it may also, however, mean that the potential for influencing the curriculum is enhanced.

The learning organisation model

7.13 In the learning organisation model, the careers service becomes part of a service designed to foster the career development of all members of the institution: staff as well as students. This is linked to the notion that an organisation seeking to become more flexible and dynamic may not be prepared to offer its staff long-term security, but instead should support them in regularly reviewing their career development to maintain their employability and sense of career direction (see Herriot and Pemberton, 1995; Hirsh *et al.*, 1995; Kidd, 1996).

7.14 While academic culture tends to be resistant to such notions, the decline of academic tenure, and the growth of short-term contracts for academic and other staff, potentially lead in this direction. There are a few 'straws in the wind':

(a) The recent Concordat between the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, the Research Councils and the Royal Society sets standards for the career management and conditions of employment for contract researchers. In Scotland, the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council has funded a Contract Research Staff Initiative which has included a contract with the Scottish Graduate Careers Programme (a joint initiative of all the higher education careers services in Scotland) to run career development courses for research staff, a 'training the trainers' course, and resource packs for such research staff and trainers (*Phoenix*, March 1996).

(b) In one institution, it was suggested that some of the money being used in releasing senior staff to early retirement could be better invested in a Career Development Unit which would enable all staff to review opportunities at any stage of their career.

(c) In another institution, the careers service has been involved in running a short course on 'Managing Your Future' as a regular feature of the Personnel Office's training programme for staff.

(d) Many institutions have introduced appraisal systems which in principle provide opportunities to review career progress and options.

7.04 If such activities expand, the relationship between services for staff and for students becomes an important issue. While they have different bases, because one is linked to an employment contract and the other to a client/customer relationship, the overlap between them is likely to grow: an increasing number of students have jobs as part-time workers within the institution; some are interested in academic careers; and with the growth of mature students, the age differentiation between the two groups is becoming more blurred. Certainly if staff become more attentive to the need to take systematic responsibility for their own career development, they are likely to attach greater value to such work with students, particularly if it is based on similar principles and practices. The integration or at least strong linking of such services could therefore bring considerable benefits, even though it at present looks more remote than most of the other models being considered here.

Strategic issues

7.05 The four models outlined above are by no means incompatible with one another. There are however tensions between them which mean that, beyond a certain level of provision, they may require some degree of structural separation. For example, the integrated guidance model requires some separation from the curriculum, to assure its impartiality in relation to educational choices; this makes it difficult to combine with the curriculum model. Again, the integrated guidance model may mean some weakening of links with the labour market (see para 7.11), whereas the integrated placement model requires these links to be strengthened. Finally, all three of these models are focused on students, whereas the learning organisation model focuses more strongly on provision for staff.

7.06 Such separation may take place at a number of deepening levels:

(a) Separation of functions within services, with different staff responsible for different activities (e.g. curriculum manager, student placement manager).

(b) Structuring these functions as separate units within the careers service, perhaps with separate advisory/management structures.

(c) Structuring the functions as separate units in their own right, with appropriate links with the careers service (e.g. involvement in management or advisory groups, or bridging roles spanning the unit and the service).

7.07 Alternatively, as we have seen, one of the models may become so dominant that the careers service becomes integrated into a new structure designed to address its needs. Such structures may be hybrids of two or more models, but – because of the tensions between them – are unlikely to represent them in equal measure.

7.08 Strategic issues relating to the within-institution models accordingly include:

(a) What is the scope within institutions for providing integrated guidance support to students prior to, during and on exit from their courses?

(b) What is the scope within institutions for integrating placement work on exit with course-related placements and placements into part-time and vacation jobs?

(c) What is the scope within institutions for incorporating career management skills into the curriculum, either separately or linked to wider concerns for employability and personal transferable skills?

(d) What is the scope within institutions for fostering the career development of staff as well as students?

(e) How far should the careers service aim to be the delivery vehicle for these various functions, and how far should it seek to work with separate structures developed to deliver them?

(f) What are the implications of these functions for the role and position of careers services within institutions?

(g) What are the benefits, disadvantages and resource implications of these different models?

(h) In the context of limited resources, which strategic options meet the needs of students and the institution, and provide high-quality, cost-effective solutions?

BROADER STRATEGIC OPTIONS: II. POST-GRADUATION

Introduction

The four models examined in Section 7 all tend to move away from the boundary-management role on which the traditional core of careers service activities has been based (see para 6.2) and to embed careers services more strongly within institutions. The dynamics of the three further models to be considered in this section are different: they move the focus of attention beyond the boundary into offering continued support post-graduation. The first of these is concerned with offering extended support for a limited period post-graduation; the second with offering support on a lifelong basis to graduates of any institution; and the third with confining the lifelong support to the institution's own alumni.

The extended-support model

In the extended-support model, the careers service is designed to support students not only on exit from the institution but also in the initial period of career development post-graduation.

This model recognises that many students now take longer to stabilise in an initial career direction. A survey of Sussex graduates, for example, showed that six months after graduation, almost one in three of graduates in employment were in short-term or temporary jobs, but that this tended to be confined to the early stage of career development: it was uncommon for graduates to take a series of such jobs for more than 12 months. By three years after graduation, 72% were in 'permanent employment', as opposed to 41% at the six-month stage (Connor and Pollard, 1996). Again, a follow-up study of graduates from Scottish institutions of higher education found that the proportion of unemployed graduates declined from 8.7% six months after graduation to 2.0% a little over three years later (Scottish Graduate Careers Partnership, 1996).

The period of extended transition is in part related to the more diverse nature of the graduate labour market, and the demand from SMEs in particular for people who already have some work experience. In addition, it seems that more students are now deferring serious consideration to job-hunting until after they have completed their degree. The more sustained pressure of assessment stemming from modularisation and semesterisation has contributed to this (see para 6.13d). On the other hand, the pressure of student debt (see para 3.13) means that students need to find some work as quickly as possible in order to start to bring in some income. This has stimulated policy concerns about the need to ensure that students get support in developing their employability during this period rather than being unemployed or getting marooned in low-level jobs.

This raises the question of how far it is the careers service's job to support graduates during the initial post-graduation period. Is it part of the implicit 'contract' of higher education institutions with their students that they should at least provide help until the students are launched in a career direction (see paras 4.6–4.7)? Or is this something that they do out of generosity where the resources are available? This is an important issue for many institutions: the Sussex follow-up survey, for example, found that 40% had used the university's careers service since graduating (Connor and Pollard, 1996). Significant attention to graduates may be at the expense of services offered to current students. The 1995/96 annual report of the careers service at Brighton noted that the offer of an 'after-care' service for up to a year after graduation 'was used by an increasingly large number of graduates and, whilst much valued by them, proved an increasingly inefficient and uneconomic way for the careers centre to operate'. A number of institutions now charge the direct costs of vacancy bulletins to those who want these mailed to them. London ceases to offer a free service to London graduates at the end of the calendar year in which they graduate; thereafter it charges fees to all users. This is the point at which the first-destination data are collected: if such data are regarded as the key performance indicator (see para 4.9), ending the free service at this point makes hard-headed sense. Most institutions, however, make their services available free of charge to their graduates for an extended period (commonly three years) or even on a lifelong basis (see para 8.18 below).

The position is complicated by the fact that many graduates move back to their home town or elsewhere at some distance from their place of study. Accordingly, a 'mutual aid' scheme has been established under which services have agreed to offer what services they can to each other's graduates (and current students) for three years post-graduation. Current practice, however, varies considerably, from London which charges for all services to such users, to others which offer a free service to all-comers, the only restriction being that they may not have access to full careers

adviser interviews during busy times. An AGCAS survey conducted in 1994 suggested that the great majority fell towards the latter end of the spectrum. Nonetheless, the diversity of views on this – and the very different situations faced by services in densely-populated and thinly-populated areas – has made it difficult to promote the 'mutual aid' provision as a standard nationally-available service. A limited national baseline has been established by a telephone advisory service (Graduate Careerline) funded by AGCAS and run from two sites (Bristol and Strathclyde), which in 1995 received over 1,100 calls. The Internet offers further possibilities both for extending this baseline and for making it easier for students to maintain contact with their own institution (see paras 10.3 and 10.6).

8.7 The diversity of provision is even greater when consideration is given to *additional* provision addressed directly to the needs of recent graduates who have not yet found a launching-pad for their post-graduation careers. A number of services offer job-search workshops or jobclubs, in some cases funded by TECs/LECs and other bodies. Some of these are run by careers services on their own; some in partnership with other careers services and/or other organisations. Beyond this, some careers services have also become involved as partners in longer training and/or work-experience programmes for unemployed graduates, often involving SMEs. These programmes are particularly common in parts of the UK – Scotland, Wales, North-East England – where they are linked to government and TEC/LEC economic strategies for retaining more graduates in the region. They can also be linked more widely with economic strategies designed to stimulate innovation and development in SMEs through more effective utilisation of graduates (see para 3.9). The TEC National Council (1997) has argued that careers services should be more active in such schemes.

8.8 In this field, however, careers services are in a competitive market. A number of other initiatives have developed within the public, private and voluntary sectors addressing the guidance, training and placement needs of recent graduates. Other organisations have services to offer, including guidance organisations (notably the careers companies set up as a result of the reorganisation of the statutory Careers Service – see para 4.12), employment agencies/'deployers' (which are playing an increasingly important role in helping graduates to find an initial toehold in the labour market), and training organisations (including university business schools). Key issues for careers services are whether they seek to work in partnership or competitive mode with such organisations, and whether they do so alone or in partnership with other higher education careers services. Few are in a position to be effective in operating alone in this area. There is however anxiety that relying on other organisations in order to establish a strong presence in the post-graduation market may encourage these other organisations to offer competitive services closer to careers services' 'core' business. Whether these concerns are best met through co-operative arrangements which define terrain, or by a competitive approach, is a matter of fine judgement.

8.9 A further important issue is the amount of effort careers services are prepared and able to expend in developing the partnerships, getting to know the agendas of potential funding bodies, harnessing sources of influence, and learning how to prepare bids. Some have been successful in playing leading roles and winning substantial resources to enhance the support they can offer to recent graduates; others have been slow in responding to the possibilities, and have been sidelined by the initiatives of others.

8.10 The nature of the partnerships formed to carry forward these activities varies. Some represent a network approach in which each of the partners provides an agreed contribution to a joint programme. Others have led an establishment of a separate jointly-managed structure (e.g. Graduate Support, a joint venture of Newcastle and Northumbria, with funding from the local TECs, which employs a full-time careers adviser plus administrative staff, and has a programme of workshops and training courses as part of a wider partnership arrangement).

8.11 The growth of local and regional partnerships to strengthen the 'extended support' model presents a dilemma for careers services. The 'mutual aid' scheme provides a framework which could enable careers services to establish a strong national presence in the post-graduation 'market', fortified by the collaborative resources of AGCAS and CSU. But the differences of approach make it difficult to harmonise this into a coherent service based on common principles. In addition, the local and regional partnerships lead to still greater diversity of practice and also to difficult questions about the extent to which the AGCAS and CSU resources can and should be shared with the other bodies involved. The way in which these tensions are resolved is likely to have a significant influence on the future role and structure of careers services.

The lifelong guidance model

8.12 In the lifelong guidance model, the careers service is part of a lifelong guidance service designed to support graduates from any higher education institution in their career development – in other words, their progression in learning and in work (see para 3.5). The model is linked to the recognition that individuals now increasingly need to take more responsibility for their own career development, on an ongoing basis, regularly

reviewing their career progression and employability, so that their skills do not atrophy. The growth in the number of mature students (see para 3.11) means that many careers services are already, in principle at least, offering lifelong guidance: the model seeks to make this service more widely available.

8.13 There are at least two different ways in which careers services and their institutions might move in this direction. One is as part of a strategy for positioning higher education institutions in relation to lifelong learning. If such institutions want to locate themselves as the natural point to which individuals come when seeking career development or redirection, then to offer a guidance service on a lifelong basis may seem attractive. This rationale may be broadened if higher education institutions link with each other and possibly also with further education institutions within a regional strategy. There may be tensions between those who view such services as impartial guidance services which will probably provide recruitment spin-offs but will do so indirectly, and those who view them as direct recruitment devices. Regional agreements linked to clear quality standards may however be able to manage these tensions. Such agreements are already beginning to be developed in some areas in relation to pre-entry guidance: within a lifelong learning system, all guidance is potentially pre-entry guidance.

8.14 The other approach is to view lifelong guidance as an opportunity for the careers service's skills to be marketed more widely, on an income-generating basis. Higher education institutions are increasingly interested in finding new markets for resources developed for their core business. The income for such services might come from individuals themselves, and/or from employers (for outplacement or employee-development work) and/or from government and other funding sources.

8.15 The main initiative which has stimulated careers services to explore this area has been the government-funded adult guidance schemes launched through a number of TECs/LECs (see para 5.8). Some of these have involved guidance vouchers which individuals could redeem at a number of approved agencies (see Watts, 1995). The vouchers were often on a full-cost basis for unemployed or unwaged people, and on a part-cost basis for employed individuals. A number of higher education careers services have been involved in such schemes, and in many cases have been regarded as the natural port of call for graduates. In some cases this has enabled them to receive income for services which they were already providing free of charge to alumni or under the mutual-aid scheme. It has also, however, encouraged them to start exploring the possibility of charging individuals for services, particularly beyond the three-year mutual-aid watershed (cf. para 5.6).

8.16 This model raises even more strongly some of the issues discussed earlier in relation to the 'extended support' model. While the latter can be viewed as a natural extension of the core, the 'lifelong guidance' model involves moving into a wider and more competitive area, where the rationale for involvement of higher education careers services, and the adequacy of their expertise, are more open to contestation. Again, therefore, the issue arises of whether careers services should seek to forge stronger links with each other and/or with other partners. Successful moves into this field may require a different structure, a different culture, and different skills, than those commonly found in individual careers services at present. Some of these can be found through partnerships. Such partnerships can be very effective where trust is maintained; in some cases, however, careers services have felt that they have been used as stepping-stones for other organisations to establish their own presence in this field.

The alumni model

8.17 Finally, under the alumni model, the careers service becomes part of a longer-term support and networking service for its institution's own alumni, as part of the institution's strategy for maintaining alumni links. This means moving into the lifelong guidance field, but on a much narrower basis.

8.18 A few universities, including but not confined to Cambridge and Oxford, have always viewed their ex-students as being members for life, and therefore as being entitled to use the facilities of the university, including the careers service. In practice, this facility has not been widely publicised. As a result, the demand for it has been limited, and therefore manageable.

8.19 The erosion of public funding for higher education institutions is however encouraging them to look for alternative sources of funding, one of which is to move towards the tradition of alumni donations which has been an important financial source for higher education in the USA. This is encouraging more institutions to set up alumni offices, and to look for ways of maintaining active contact with alumni. Access to a careers service would seem to be a facility that might be of particular interest in this respect.

8.20 This raises the question of the extent to which such a service should be marketed on a fee-paying basis to users, or offered as a free service by the institution as a form of investment, or based on sponsorship either through the alumni association or from the business sector. Experience in both the USA and the UK suggests that 'in general neither Americans nor British are prepared to pay the commercial costs of adult career counselling in the same way as they are used to paying

for their hairdressers, garage mechanics and lawyers': therefore some subsidy would seem necessary if alumni careers services are to be viable (Snow, 1994, pp.14–15).

8.21 A number of initiatives for alumni have been launched. Bristol has run workshops for those aged 25–35 who are contemplating career change. Manchester has agreed to an award of £22,000 to pump-prime an alumni careers service. Oxford, too, has been looking at ways of offering a more systematic and proactive service to alumni. Such services in the USA include career seminars, career development courses, career counselling, electronic services through websites, job fairs, and credentials services (Phillips, 1996). There are also possibilities for building stronger networking between alumni, or even offering head-hunting services for employers (formalising the 'old boy'/'old girl' network).

8.22 In many cases these possibilities for offering help to alumni are linked to strategies for using alumni in providing help to current students. Many services already invite alumni back to give talks to students and take part in careers fairs. This can be regarded simply as an information source, but also more broadly as leading to networking possibilities. A number have set up careers networks comprising databases of alumni who have agreed to provide information about careers over the telephone, in writing, by e-mail or in person to current students. This can be extended by using alumni for shadowing, work-experience and mentoring schemes.

8.23 A further dimension is using alumni as sources of feedback on course relevance to employment. A number of institutions and departments have conducted surveys of former students to find out how relevant their courses have been to their jobs in terms of skills as well as knowledge, and what skills deficits might usefully have been addressed within the course provision. The surveys sometimes include questions about the willingness of alumni to be involved in initiatives designed to improve the relevance and responsiveness of teaching and learning, or to help in other ways. Where they have been planned in conjunction with careers services as well as alumni offices, there is scope for useful synergy between the different agendas.

8.24 The balance between services *to* and *from* alumni needs to be carefully struck, but they can go well together: involving alumni in offering help to students and to institutions can be viewed as part of developing the 'warm glow' which maintains their links with their institutions. If however the services *to* alumni are to be a substantial part of the strategy, they require customised provision designed to address their needs, rather than add-ons utilising existing resources designed mainly for current students.

Strategic issues

8.25 The models examined in this section potentially shift the focus of careers services away from current students towards graduates. This may be regarded as a natural enhancement of their existing activities. It may also, however, be viewed as syphoning off resources which should be fully applied to supplying services to students. Beyond a limited level of activity, therefore, these models all require additional resourcing. Seeking and managing such resources is a significant management task.

8.26 For these reasons, some institutions may view these models as being outside their remit or concern. Others may choose one of them at the expense of the others:

(a) An institution which took a narrowly institution-centred view might go for the alumni model, and view 'extended support' as part of this model, giving strong attention to extended support for its own graduates and only minimal 'mutual aid' support to graduates from other institutions.

(b) Another institution might view extended support as a natural extension of its core role, but decide against the lifelong learning and alumni models on the grounds that this would require expertise which it does not seek to possess.

(c) A further institution might seek to submerge any attention to extended support and to alumni within a range of lifelong guidance services which are available to all-comers on a costed basis.

8.27 Of the three post-graduation models, the alumni model is the only one which is strongly compatible with institution-based careers services; the 'extended support' and 'lifelong guidance' models tend, as already noted, to pull away from it towards broader forms of partnership. On the other hand, some institutions may take the view that movement towards a much more flexible lifelong learning system, with easy movement between as well as within institutions, is likely to weaken institutional loyalties and the feasibility of alumni strategies.

8.28 As with the within-institution models (para 7.36), some services may create separate units to develop activities in one or more of these areas (e.g. an alumni careers unit). These units may be linked with, or become part of, partnership arrangements. Alternatively, careers services may collaborate with others in setting up separate structures to deliver the models in a cohesive way, or form appropriate relationships with such structures where they already exist. Unlike the within-institution models, however, it seems unlikely that careers services would become wholly merged into these structures: to do so would be to lose their institutional roots.

Strategic issues relating to the post-graduation options accordingly include:

(a) What is the scope for extending services to cover recent graduates both of the host institution and of other institutions?

(b) What is the scope for careers services to play a role in making guidance available in the local community on a lifelong basis?

(c) What is the scope for building lifelong careers services for alumni?

(d) Which of these activities should the careers service engage in?

(e) How are the activities to be resourced?

(f) Should the careers service aim to deliver such activities alone or in partnership with others?

(g) Which partners should it seek and what are the implications of such partnerships?

The models outlined in this and the preceding section provide seven strategic directions for careers services. The relationship between these models and the current core and supplementary activities of careers services (see Section 6) is outlined diagrammatically in Figure 1. Strongly resourced services may retain a significant involvement in activities linked to most or all of these models without changing their current shape. In other institutions, however, it seems more likely that what will emerge will be a distributed structure, with a variety of different units each attending to one or more of the models. Within such a structure, the careers service might continue to be built around the traditional core, with appropriate links with the other units; or it might significantly change its shape and nature; or it might become the co-ordinating focus for a range of distributed services.

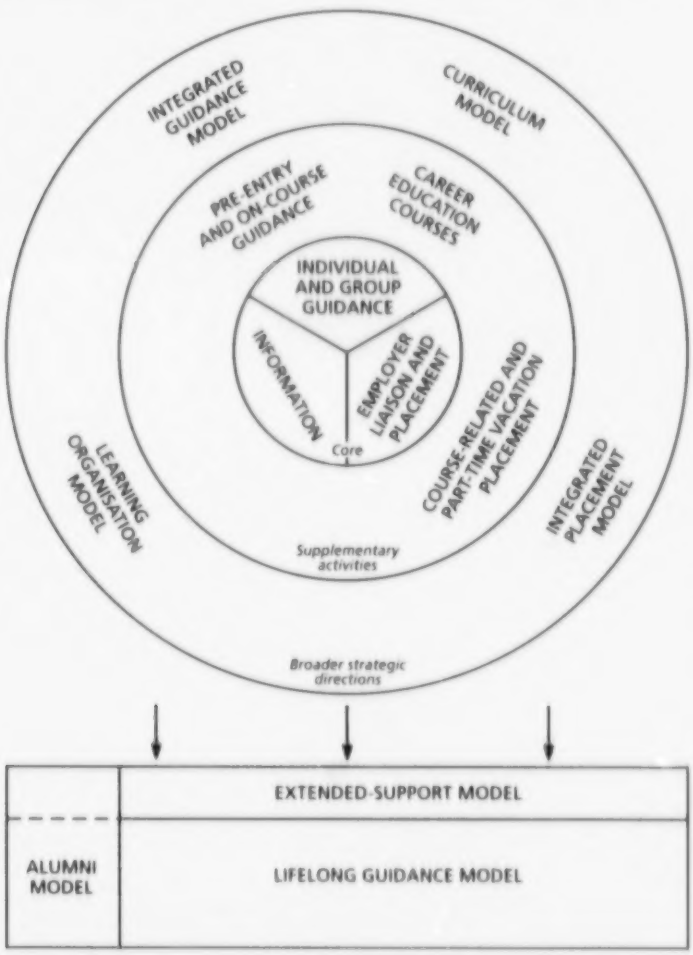

Figure 1

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

Introduction

This section will examine three sets of professional issues which cross-cut the strategic options discussed in the preceding sections:

(a) Structures of professional collaboration.

(b) Recruitment and professional development.

(c) Quality assurance.

Structures of professional collaboration

Structures of professional collaboration are more strongly developed in careers services than in most other 'operational' areas of higher education. As noted in para 2.19, such collaboration started with the pooling of data on first destinations of graduates, and developed into two complementary bodies: the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), which includes all universities and most major colleges of higher education (130 institutions and around 800 staff) in the UK and Eire; and the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (CSU), which is an agency of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP), and the Conference of Scottish Centrally Funded Colleges (CSCFC).

AGCAS is the professional association for careers services in higher education, providing leadership and support to, and fostering collaboration between, its member services. It operates through a biennial conference, a plenary committee of heads of services, an executive committee, and over 25 sub-committees and working parties. The latter cover areas of development (careers education, IT systems, psychometric assessment), operational matters (finance, the association's professional journal *Phoenix*, publications, PROSPECT (HE) liaison, statistics, video production), particular target-groups (disabled graduates, HND students, international students, older graduates, services to graduates), particular occupational sectors (art and design, legal profession, teaching profession), related activities (education liaison, student employment services), professional issues (credentials, performance management, racial equality, sex equality, training and development), and other matters (European work, vocational courses, wider entry to higher education). AGCAS members work in teams to write and update a series of over 50 information booklets and the occupational profiles that form the heart of the PROSPECT (HE) computer-aided guidance system. AGCAS is also heavily involved in training and professional development work (see para 2.23).

CSU, based in Manchester, supports the work of higher education careers services in all universities and most colleges of higher education in the UK and Eire. Its mission is to lead and support the development of high-quality careers guidance information and recruitment advertising in higher education: it fulfils this mission in close collaboration with AGCAS. Although universities and colleges subscribe to CSU, over 90% of its revenue is earned from recruitment and postgraduate-course advertising in its subsidiary publishing company; the success of this business in recent years has enabled it greatly to expand the range of products and services it provides for careers service. Its staff of over 70 publish each year over a million copies of the AGCAS information booklets, plus other employer and postgraduate directories and vacancy publications; they also manage and develop the PROSPECT (HE) computer-aided guidance system and a range of other guidance and administrative software. CSU's rapidly developing web site – which includes databases on occupations, employers and postgraduate courses, plus vacancy information and links to employer, careers-service and other homepages – is currently (March 1997) attracting 250,000 'hits' a month. Some of the income from CSU's publishing business is fed back to support AGCAS activities (in 1996 this sum amounted to over £100,000); around £250,000 a year is used to support the information and software used by careers services.

Through the activities of AGCAS and CSU, a rich range of common resources has been developed in a very cost-effective way: grounded in the day-to-day experience of services, but reducing duplication, overcoming the potential limitations of small institution-based services, and making available to all the benefits of the extensive range of expertise within the wider AGCAS network, supported by the professional expertise of CSU. These collaborative mechanisms have also provided an important source of mutual support, plus a capacity for innovation, and a source of influence through their access to CVCP in particular (this has been enhanced by the development of closer links between CSU and CVCP through an agency framework agreement).

Many careers advisers have developed a strong sense of identity with AGCAS. The American sociologist Gouldner (1957/58) distinguished between 'locals' who are primarily concerned with institutional loyalties, and 'cosmopolitans' whose primary reference group is their professional colleagues in other organisations. There has been a significant growth of 'cosmopolitans' within careers services in higher education. This has been supported by some senior managers who view a professionally active careers service as analagous to a research-active academic department.

While the structures of professional collaboration within AGCAS remain strong, they have been coming under some strain, for three main reasons:

(a) The pressure on resources. As the head of one service commented:

> 'When staff in a service are really hard pressed to deliver basic services at any reasonable standard within their own institution, a kind of siege mentality sets in – of necessity. Careers services then withdraw support from communal AGCAS activities.'

> This is particularly an issue for small services, which in many ways are more dependent on the support and resources which AGCAS provides, but have less capacity to contribute to their development.

(b) The more competitive culture within higher education. This means that there is more questioning of activities which are not seen as being directed to the narrow immediate benefit of the service's own institution. In one university, for example, a senior manager calculated the amount of staff time committed to AGCAS activities as comprising the equivalent of a half-time careers adviser post, and threatened to reduce the staffing by this amount on the grounds that it indicated over-staffing.

(c) The growing diversity between institutions, in terms of status, mission, culture and resources. As a result, the interests of services are tending to diverge, and it is not always easy to find common ground.

The result is that greater difficulties are being experienced in recruiting writers for the information booklets, and in securing volunteers to sit on the various AGCAS committees, sub-committees and working parties. There are also growing tensions between services which feel they are making a disproportionately strong contribution and services perceived as taking a 'free ride'; this can be exacerbated by the smaller services' resentment and envy of services in larger and better-resourced institutions. Increased work pressures mean less time to cultivate and heal collaborative relationships based on mutual understanding.

These difficulties have the potential to create some tensions between the interests of CSU and of AGCAS. The fulfilment of CSU's charitable purpose is significantly dependent on its commercial success: only around 10% of its income comes from its higher education institutions' subscriptions. This leaves it open at times to being regarded by some careers advisers as being 'too commercial' in the way it operates. On the other hand, CSU's operations are constrained by the need to meet the interests of all its members. In particular, it has not been able in the past to respond to the increasing wish of employers to target particular institutions: although this is now changing, it has left open a large market which its commercial competitors have successfully exploited. The sensitivity of these issues is exacerbated by the fact that employers' targeting of institutions can be viewed as reinforcing status differences between higher education institutions and the social-class, racial and age inequalities with which they are associated (Brown and Scase, 1994). Strong efforts have been made by both AGCAS and CSU to manage these tensions.

Creatively adapting the structures of professional collaboration is critical if the professional quality of careers services is to be sustained and developed. Such adaptation will be made easier if the culture of higher education begins to place more emphasis on partnership rather than competition. Whatever happens in this respect, the issues outlined above raise three important questions for AGCAS:

(a) Should there be a tighter specification of what member institutions are expected to contribute as part of their membership of AGCAS?

(b) Should AGCAS adopt a more flexible and diverse structure which permits and encourages clusters of institutions with common interests to come together? A number of networks of this kind already exist, on a regional or other basis. Some are highly formalised: the strongest is the Scottish Graduate Careers Partnership, the formal structure of which has enabled it to make joint bids for funding to support a wide range of common initiatives; further clusters are moving in the same direction. Other networks are more informal.

(c) If the broad remit covered by careers services in some institutions is now increasingly covered in other institutions by a range of distributed services, should the structure of AGCAS as based upon institutional membership linked to an identifiable single service be reviewed? Should it adopt a more octopus-like form, extending its franchise to a wider range of roles, functions and organisational structures?

In any consideration of the future of careers services, the value of the AGCAS/CSU relationship should not be

underestimated. Any developments which led to the weakening or dismantling of this relationship would be likely to have a significant and damaging effect on the quality and cost of careers guidance in higher education.

Recruitment and professional development

As outlined in Section 2 (paras 2.23–2.24), the last couple of decades have seen a considerable growth of professionalisation within careers services in higher education. Nonetheless, the extent to which staff hold formal qualifications is still very varied. An AGCAS survey conducted in February 1996, to which 38% of its members responded, indicated that 48% of heads of services and 58% of careers advisers held a Diploma in Careers Guidance. In all, three-quarters held a postgraduate qualification of some kind: these included academic postgraduate degrees, teaching certificates, and diplomas in personnel management, librarianship, management and counselling. The perceived lack of a consistent standard of professionalism remains a source of weakness in outsiders' perceptions of careers services.

With the establishment of the Certificate and Diploma in Careers Guidance in Higher Education (para 2.23), an important issue for the future is whether guidance qualifications should be the core for all professional staff, with other skills as add-ons, or whether a range of different professional backgrounds should continue to be encouraged. Some services are moving towards the former position, insisting for example that any new recruits without a professional guidance qualification should enrol for the AGCAS/Reading Certificate. Others take a different view, particularly larger services which have more capacity for diversified staffing. Services which have moved strongly away from the long individual interview are beginning to look less for traditional guidance skills than for skills in teaching-and-learning matters, consultancy skills, and IT skills.

A further important issue is whether there is sufficient managerial expertise within careers services at present. As the potential range of functions of careers services grows, without any increase in core resourcing, the effective management of resources becomes more and more crucial. Skills in forging partnerships and in securing and managing more varied sources of funding are critical for development. There is concern that some heads of services view themselves as guidance professionals rather than as managers, and that as professionalisation in terms of guidance skills has grown, careers services seem to have found it more difficult to produce leaders who have an impact both within their institution (see para 4.24) and at a national level. Salary scales are an important factor here. The AGCAS Resources Survey in 1995 showed that the salary levels of heads of services in UK institutions were as follows:

£34,001 or more	18
£30,001 – 34,000	26
£26,001 – 30,000	22
£22,001 – 26,000	19
£18,001 – 22,000	22
£14,001 – 18,000	5
	112

The extent to which professionalisation is likely to grow, and the forms it is likely to take, are linked to the growth of professionalisation in higher education as a whole. Ironically, higher education – which is seeking to expand its role in the field of continuing professional development through the formal qualifications it is able to offer – has been tardy and ambivalent in applying such processes to its own practices. Academic staff are expected to have research qualifications but not teaching qualifications; careers advisers who have acquired doctorates in academic fields which are at best of marginal relevance to their current roles find it easier than others to command academics' respect. There is however growing pressure to introduce a system of accreditation for teaching in higher education, probably on a voluntary basis to start with, but perhaps moving towards a compulsory system in the long term. If this happens, it will increase the pressure for greater professionalisation in careers services.

Another important issue is career progression routes for staff in careers services. The career structure within services is limited (though stronger progression routes from information officers to careers advisers would be helpful). There also seem to be few evident exit routes. Several people consulted in the course of this inquiry commented that in their view too many staff entered careers services and stayed there. More attention is arguably needed to developing and accrediting skills – including managerial skills – to provide more avenues for career progression out of careers services, so producing greater voluntary rotation of staff. The move to link the AGCAS/Reading qualifications to the NVQ framework developed by the Advice, Guidance, Counselling and Psychotherapy Lead Body is a move in this direction, but it needs to be developed a lot further. It is ironic that a professional group that is now concerned so strongly with helping students to identify their skills and understand the transferability of these skills has paid so little attention to doing this for itself. There is an important question of 'modelling' here: if careers services are to help students to develop the full range of career management skills outlined in para 7.28, they need to review how far they are being seen to practise what they preach.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance is defined by the Higher Education Quality Council (1995a) as 'all the arrangements and procedures by which an institution discharges its corporate responsibility for articulating, maintaining and enhancing the standard of those activities for which it is responsible' (p.3). The institutional quality-assessment procedures currently being used in higher education include some attention to careers guidance (see para 5.11). It is questionable, however, whether these provide an adequate means of assuring the quality of careers services themselves. Institutions find it difficult to know how to assess the quality of what their services are delivering. Some senior managers feel that clear standards and benchmarks are lacking.

Some services have sought to take the initiative in responding to the increased pressures towards accountability:

(a) Annual reports are viewed by many services as important instruments of accountability (though practice on this is uneven, and some services do not produce such reports).

(b) Many services have sought to extend and formalise their internal evaluation procedures. These include attendance records, periodic feedback surveys of recent graduates, evaluation sheets after particular activities, and use of focus groups to review particular issues or gain feedback on the service as a whole.

(c) Efforts have been made to identify more robust quantitative and qualitative measures of the outcomes of particular activities (see AGCAS, 1991).

(d) Some services have issued codes of practice and statements of entitlement. London, for example, has published a Clients' Charter which outlines in very specific terms what the careers service offers to students and graduates, to employers, and to the university's colleges and institutes, and 'what to do if something goes wrong'.

(e) One service, Strathclyde, has successfully applied for a Charter Mark.

(f) Some services have benefited free of charge from commercial benchmarking through taking part in student surveys funded by employers or in other ways.

A number of services have also been involved in formal quality-assurance procedures established by TECs/LECs, as a result of their involvement in local adult guidance schemes (see para 8.15). One service commented that the procedure had been resented in prospect but valued in retrospect, as a helpful structuring and formalising of what had previously been informal processes.

The main responsibility for quality assurance lies with the institution, which has a responsibility for assuring the general quality of the student's experience of higher education. Arguably, however, institutions need support from organisations like AGCAS to provide benchmarks against which they can review their performance. Some conduct periodic performance reviews in which they invite an assessor from a careers service in a comparable institution to take part. Beyond this, however, there is a case for AGCAS to develop more detailed and clearly defined quality standards to supplement the minimalist standards it currently requires from institutions in order to qualify for AGCAS membership (see para 6.3). These standards need to acknowledge the different models underlying current practice in different institutions (see para 5.15).

Currently detailed work on quality standards across all sectors of guidance provision is being carried out by the National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance. These are organisational standards for services, and are designed to complement the competence standards for individual practitioners already developed by the Advice, Guidance, Counselling and Psychotherapy Lead Body (see para 9.15). The standards are being developed from the viewpoint of the user, and it is recognised that their implementation will need to be reconciled with whatever arrangements are already in place for assuring quality from a managerial viewpoint (Hawthorn, 1995). It is likely that one of the ways in which the standards will be implemented is through an externally-monitored kitemarking procedure. AGCAS is a member of NACCEG, and is involved in this work. The resulting standards may provide a basis for a more structured approach to quality assurance, harmonised with other sectors of guidance provision, and meeting the criterion suggested by one careers service in its evidence to this review:

> 'The challenge to all is to find ways of ensuring professional development and quality assurance without creating further bureaucratic burdens which divert resource away from the very services which are being developed or measured.'

Strategic issues

Strategic issues identified in this section accordingly include:

(a) How can the structure of AGCAS be adapted to sustain and extend the strong structures of professional collaboration that have been developed across careers services?

(b) How can more effective structures of professional and career development be developed for staff, to build a wider range of expertise, and enable more flexible movement in and out of careers services?

(c) How can clearer quality standards and benchmarking procedures be developed to assure the quality of careers services?

THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The use of information technology in careers services has been mentioned in earlier parts of this report. In particular, reference has been made to the development of computer-aided guidance systems (para 2.14), to the implications of wider access to such systems within institutions (para 4.31), and to the wide range of software developed by CSU (see para 9.4). These resources are already widely used and have had considerable impact on the way in which careers services operate.

It is certain, however, that the impact will continue to grow and take new forms over the next few years. Higher education institutions have invested heavily in information technology. Most institutions have extensive networking, with access points in libraries, departments and halls of residence. Their students represent the largest pool of IT-literate people in the country, and expect their institutions to be at the cutting-edge of IT implementation. E-mail is increasingly being used for internal communications; students are also making growing use of the Internet to receive, exchange and disseminate information.

In principle, this could make it possible to deliver the main aspects of a careers service's work through a 'virtual career centre' available where users are, rather than requiring them to come to a specific location. Most forms of information about occupations, courses, employers, jobs and vacancies could be supplied through the Internet. The same could be true of the guidance process, with 'quick queries' being conducted through e-mail, group guidance through newsgroups, and careers education through computer-aided distance learning; once videophones become more widespread, the potential for delivering guidance at a distance will become even greater. The placement operation, too, could be conducted significantly through the Internet, with electronic pooling of vacancy information, electronic databases of job applicants which employers can search, electronic application forms, and electronic submission of CVs and resumes.

The extent to which all of this will supplant or complement existing services is not yet clear. Many graduate recruiters have web sites, but are being cautious in using the Internet for the recruitment process. Similarly, careers services have been developing web sites, but largely – so far – to *promote* rather than *deliver* their services. There are important issues about security, confidentiality, quality control and access which remain to be resolved. Some of these – especially differential access to the Internet due to lack of sufficient hardware, and to some students' lack of IT literacy – are probably transitional problems; others may be more enduring.

So far as information is concerned, paper-based systems will continue to be needed alongside IT-based systems for at least a few years. There are signs of some substitution: some services, for example, are ceasing to stock bulky prospectuses of US colleges on the grounds that these are now available on the Internet, and others are thinking of phasing out the internal circulation of vacancy bulletins on similar grounds. But how far this process will extend, and at what speed, is still unclear. This poses difficulties, particularly for services with information resources that need improvement, in deciding how to allocate resources between upgrading the paper-based resources and introducing IT-based systems.

More generally, it is unlikely that virtual careers centres will provide a substitute for physical careers centres. Certainly they will make it possible to deliver improved services for users who find it difficult to gain access to the physical centres. This could overcome some of the problems currently experienced by multi-site institutions in providing an adequate minimum quality of service. It could also make it much easier for students to maintain contact with their own institution's careers service post-graduation: this could reduce the need for the current 'mutual aid' arrangements between institutions (para 8.6). But there is no sign of any reduction in student demand for the direct human contact provided by a physical centre. It is this human contact which makes the information 'warm', helps students to navigate the resources effectively, and makes it possible to respond flexibly to the complexity of individuals' needs. Also, the physical act of the visit to a dedicated location implies and supports a level of task commitment which encourages students to focus intensively on issues that may easily be given cursory attention in the normal course of their student lives.

Indeed, it can plausibly be argued that in the techno-university, the main staff functions are likely to be more concerned with guidance than with instruction. There is likely to be a switch to more resource-based learning, with students learning from a computer terminal rather than by attending lectures. The role of the lecturer will move from being 'a sage on the stage'

to becoming 'a guide on the side' (Lewis and Merton, 1996). Students will be able to access high-quality instructional material from all parts of the globe. The key issues will be selecting the appropriate material and supporting the process of relating it to the individual's needs and goals: essentially guidance issues. This could support stronger moves towards the devolution model outlined in paras 4.27–4.33.

10-8 The relationship of IT to careers services can be viewed in three ways (Watts, 1996b). It can be seen as a *tool*, extending the range of resources available; as an *alternative*, replacing other elements of the service; or as an *agent of change*, providing an opportunity to review the basic design of the service as a whole. The more it is viewed in the latter terms, the more its potential is likely to be realised. The relationship between IT development and service development should be seen as a process of 'joint optimisation' (Trist, 1981), in which technical possibilities are regularly reviewed in the light of service needs, and service structures are regularly reviewed in the light of technical developments.

10-9 Certainly it is essential for careers services to harness IT to the full. It can improve significantly the extent and quality of services, and the ease with which they can be accessed; it can also release resources for tasks that require human sensitivity. Students will increasingly expect high quality of IT delivery, and will not be impressed by 'low-tech' services. At present, exploiting the advantages of IT is being inhibited in many services by time and resource constraints: it is often viewed as a subsidiary task to be addressed when time is available. There is a need for services to develop a stronger strategy for IT, linked to their institutions' overall strategy, so that they drive the agenda.

10-10 Strategic issues relating to the use of IT accordingly include:

(a) How can the potential of IT be fully harnessed?

(b) How can IT be used not just as a tool or alternative, but as an agent of change?

STRATEGIC PLANNING

This report has outlined and discussed a variety of key strategic issues relating to the future of careers services in higher education. These issues need to be addressed at a variety of levels:

(a) National policy (see especially Section 5).

(b) Institutional policy (see especially Section 4).

(c) Careers service policy (see especially Sections 6-10).

If careers services are to take advantage of the opportunities open to them, and if institutions are to be able to structure careers services effectively in relation to their own strategic directions, a regular process of strategic planning is needed. The process will benefit from the active involvement of key stakeholders (students, academic staff, and employers). The present report may be helpful as a resource to support this process.

The form of the process might be along the following lines:

(a) *Where are we now?*

- What are the careers service's main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT analysis)?
- What are the careers service's current core activities (cf. Section 6)?
- What are its current supplementary activities (cf. Section 6)?
- Who are its major partners/competitors inside and outside the institution?

(b) *Where do we want to be in (say) five years' time?*

- What vision do we have of the careers service's future mission and purpose, and of its relationship to the future mission and purpose of the institution (cf. Section 4)?
- What are the implications of likely changes in higher education and in the world of work (cf. Section 3)?
- What are the implications of the likely national policy context regarding careers guidance provision (cf. Section 5)?
- Which strategic directions do we want to pursue over the next five years (cf. Sections 6-8)?
- What order of priority do we want to establish between these strategic directions?
- What are the risks of moving in these directions, and how can these risks be minimised?
- What structural form might the careers service take in five years' time?
- How do our professional structures and methods need to be modified and developed (cf. Section 9)?
- How do we harness IT as an agent of change (cf. Section 10)?

(c) *How do we get there?*

- What SMART objectives do we want to set ourselves for the short, medium and long term (i.e. objectives which are Specific, with Measureable outcomes that are Attainable and Relevant, incorporating a clear Time-scale)?
- Who do we need to influence, and how do we link our priorities to theirs?

(d) *How will we review and measure whether we have got there?*

- What outcomes will measure success (cf. AGCAS, 1991)?
- What stepping-stones will indicate that we are moving in the right direction?
- What process of continuing reflection do we need in order to review our goals and the extent to which we are achieving them?

APPENDIX A

CHECK-LIST OF STRATEGIC ISSUES

Section 3

(a) What are the implications of the changing concept of career for the ways in which careers services operate?

(b) What are the implications of the changes in the graduate labour market, and in particular the growing importance of SMEs?

(c) How are careers services to respond to the greater diversity of the student population in higher education?

(d) What are the implications of the moves towards a more flexible higher education system, integrated more strongly into wider structures for lifelong learning?

Section 4

(a) To what extent is providing career support to students regarded as part of the 'core offer' of the institution, or as an optional additional service?

(b) If it is an optional additional service, to what extent can employers and/or students be expected to pay for it, and what are the implications of exerting such charges?

(c) Would there be any advantages in 'outsourcing' parts or all of the service to an external supplier? What would be the disadvantages?

(d) If it is regarded as part of the 'core offer' and an embedded part of the institution, where is the service best located within the organisational structure to yield the potential benefits of such embedding?

(e) What links are needed between the careers service and senior management to realise the potential benefits of the service being institution-based?

(f) To what extent can the functions of careers services be devolved to teaching departments, and what forms of continuing expert support from careers services are needed by teaching departments to ensure quality of delivery?

Section 5

(a) Is current provision for careers guidance in higher education sufficient to yield the economic benefits from its investment in higher education?

(b) If not, what would adequate provision comprise, and how might it be secured?

(c) Should there be a lifelong careers guidance service based outside higher education institutions?

(d) What should be the relationship between such a service and careers services based inside higher education institutions?

(e) Should policy levers be used to secure a minimum standard of careers guidance provision within institutions?

(f) If so, which policy levers should be adopted?

(g) What comparative data need to be collected across institutions to monitor the effectiveness of such levers?

Section 6

(a) What is the balance to be between (i) individual and group guidance, (ii) information, and (iii) employer liaison and placement?

(b) Are current employer liaison and placement activities, supported by the first-destinations data, sufficient sources of labour market information, and if not, how are these sources to be boosted and/or supplemented?

(c) Should the core activities continue to be integrated in a single service, or be given a greater degree of organisational separation?

Section 7

(a) What is the scope within institutions for providing integrated guidance support to students prior to, during and on exit from their courses?

(b) What is the scope within institutions for integrating placement work on exit with course-related placements and placements into part-time and vacation jobs?

(c) What is the scope within institutions for incorporating career management skills into the curriculum, either separately or linked to wider concerns for employability and personal transferable skills?

(d) What is the scope within institutions for fostering the career development of staff as well as students?

(e) How far should the careers service aim to be the delivery vehicle for these various functions, and how far should it seek to work with separate structures developed to deliver them?

(f) What are the implications of these functions for the role and position of careers services within institutions?

(g) What are the benefits, disadvantages and resource-implications of these different models?

(h) In the context of limited resources, which strategic options meet the needs of students and the institution, and provide high-quality, cost-effective solutions?

Section 8

(a) What is the scope for extending services to cover recent graduates both of the host institution and of other institutions?

(b) What is the scope for careers services to play a role in making guidance available in the local community on a lifelong basis?

(c) What is the scope for building lifelong careers services for alumni?

(d) Which of these activities should the careers service engage in?

(e) How are the activities to be resourced?

(f) Should the careers service aim to deliver such activities alone or in partnership with others?

(g) Which partners should it seek and what are the implications of such partnerships?

Section 9

(a) How can the structure of AGCAS be adapted to sustain and extend the strong structures of professional collaboration that have been developed across careers services?

(b) How can more effective structures of professional and career development be developed for staff, to build a wider range of expertise, and enable more flexible movement in and out of careers services?

(c) How can clearer quality standards and benchmarking procedures be developed to assure the quality of careers services?

Section 10

(a) How can the potential of information technology be fully harnessed?

(b) How can IT be used not just as a tool or alternative, but as an agent of change?

APPENDIX B

CONSULTATION PROCESS

The work on this report was carried out between October 1996 and February 1997. It involved a range of consultations and other sources:

1. Interviews with a number of people external to careers services:
   - Richard Brown and Patrick Coldstream (Council for Industry and Higher Education)
   - Dr Bahram Bekhradnia (Higher Education Funding Council for England)
   - Dr Roger Brown and Vivienne Rivis (Higher Education Quality Council)
   - Roly Cockman (Association of Graduate Recruiters)
   - Matthew Farrow (Confederation of British Industry)
   - Sir Geoffrey Holland (University of Exeter)
   - Stephen McNair (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education)
   - Patricia Raderecht (Higher Education Careers Services Unit)
   - Shirley Trundle and Clare Matterson (National Commission of Inquiry into Higher Education)
   - Professor Leslie Wagner (Leeds Metropolitan University; Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals)
   - Professor Gareth Williams (University of London Institute of Education)

2. Telephone interviews with other people external to careers services:
   - Jeff Collinson (BT Development and Procurement, Glasgow)
   - Norman Evans (Learning from Experience Trust)
   - Trevor Fellowes (Higher Education and Employment Division, Department for Education and Employment)
   - Lee Findell (National Union of Students)
   - Simon Hamm (European Business School, London)
   - Richard Hannage (Durham University Business School)
   - Dr Peter Hawkins (University of Liverpool)
   - Mary Lord (TEC National Council)
   - Andrew Nelson (AN Associates)
   - Professor David Robertson (Liverpool John Moores University)
   - Freda Tallantyre (Unilink, University of Northumbria)

   Shorter telephone interviews were held with a number of other people on specific issues.

3. Focus-group sessions with:

(a) A large-employer group comprising Keith Bell (Price Waterhouse), Mike Killingley (Midland Bank), and Hugh Smith (BT).

(b) A group representing the viewpoints of small and medium-sized employers: John Hickson (Business Link, CILNTEC); David Kingham (Oxford Innovation); Ruth Puddick (St John's Innovation Centre, Cambridge); Liz Rhodes (Shell Technology Enterprise Programme); Paul Soanes (iD Business Design Centre, London).

(c) A group involved in student enterprise activities, brought together through STADIA: Maggie Boyle (University of Leeds); Gavin Lawrie (University of Wales, Bangor); Sean Mackney (CONTACT, Manchester); Gill Winfield (University of Warwick).

4. Two focus-group sessions with staff of careers services:

(a) From services with relatively limited resources: Sheila Cross (University College of Ripon and York St John); Denise Haslam (University of Derby); Eileen Scott (University of Luton).

(b) A group of senior AGCAS officers (past and present): Margaret Dane (Herriot-Watt University); Keith Dugdale (University of Manchester/UMIST); Dr Richard Maynard (University of Birmingham); Margaret Wallis (University of Warwick).

Interviews were held with other careers-service staff including Tony Raban (University of Cambridge), and Dr Bernard Kingston and Dr Richard Pethen (University of Sheffield). Telephone interviews were also held with a number of careers-service staff.

5. Visits to three universities: Central Lancashire, Edinburgh and Warwick. At each institution, meetings were held with:

(a) The vice-chancellor, relevant pro-vice-chancellor, and other relevant senior management.

(b) Careers service staff at different levels.

(c) A group of academic staff.

(d) A group of students.

6. Written evidence submitted by 25 careers services, plus annual reports and other relevant documents submitted by 34 institutions. There was some overlap between these groups: 47 institutions were covered altogether.

7. Various AGCAS documents.

8. A review of relevant research literature and policy documents, including a number of submissions to the Dearing Inquiry.

9. Two meetings of a project advisory group chaired by Professor Sir Graeme Davies, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Glasgow (for list of members, see page 2).

GLOSSARY

AGCAS	Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (see para 9.3)
CSU	Higher Education Careers Services Unit (see para 9.4)
CVCP	Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
LEC	Local Enterprise Company
SME	small or medium-sized enterprise
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council

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